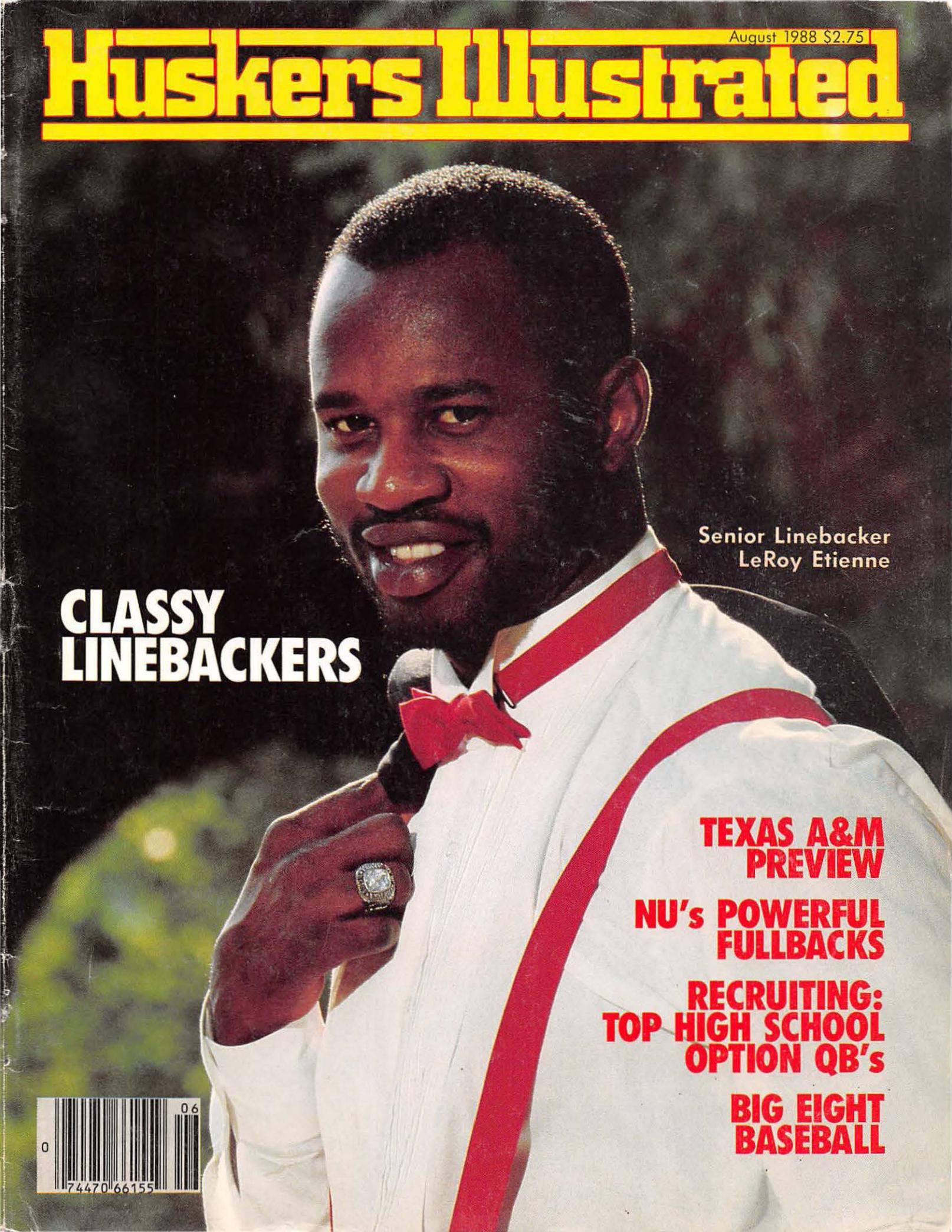


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LeRoy Etienne

**TEXAS A&M
PREVIEW**

**NU's POWERFUL
FULLBACKS**

**RECRUITING:
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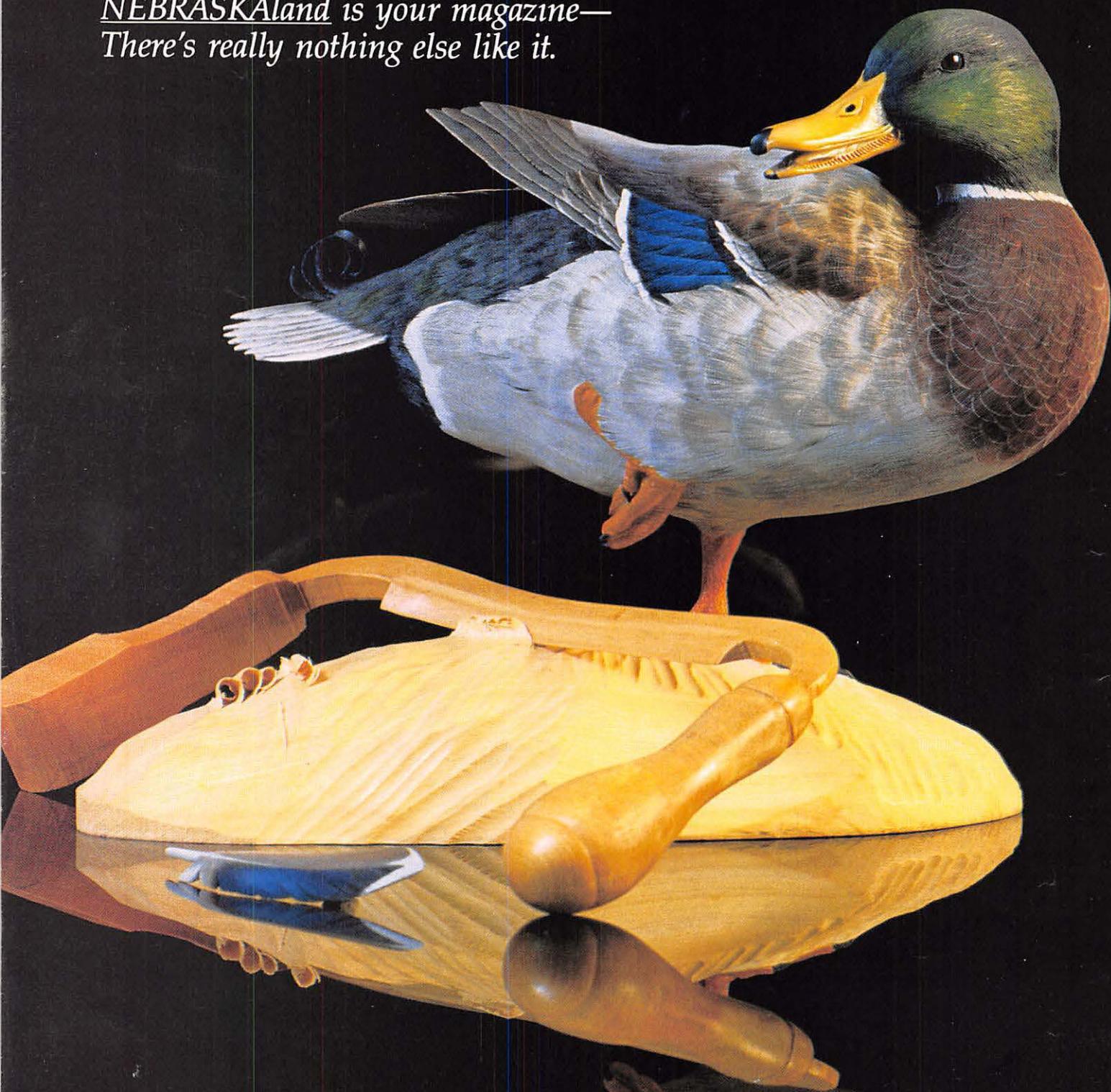
**BIG EIGHT
BASEBALL**

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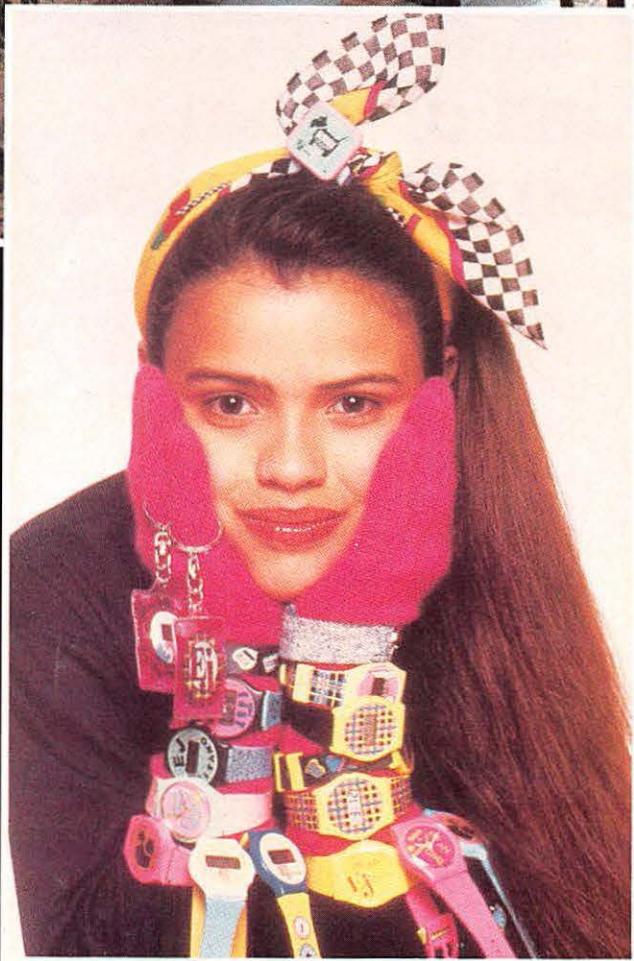


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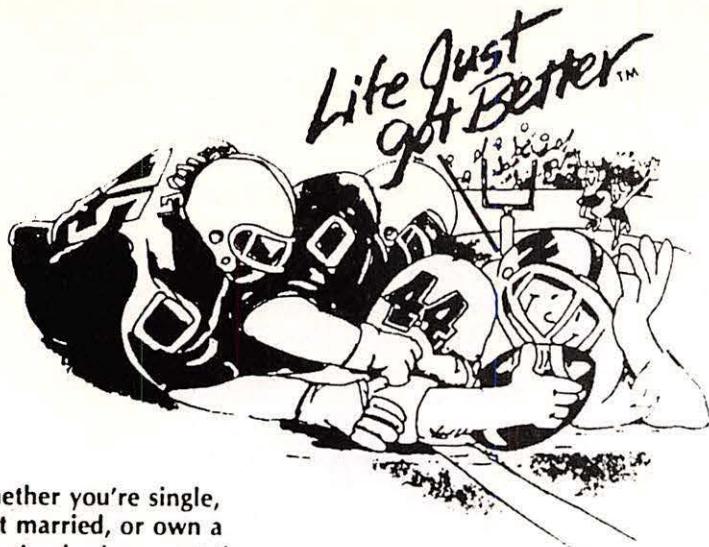
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TAPE REQUEST

Dear Huskers:

I want to express my gratitude for offering your "Back Issue Bonanza" offer. I was thoroughly impressed with the number of back issues I received. I would like to ask other readers if they have back issues available; I would like to complete my collection of *Huskers Illustrated*.

I also have VHS tapes of most regular season and bowl games dating from the 1985 season (either the game, Cornhusker Football or Tom Osborne show).

Steve Johnson
1516 S. 25th Ave.
Omaha, NE 68105

NCAA RULE CHANGE

Dear Huskers:

The NFL and NCAA and its members agree that a serious problem is about to explode. The problem is the undergraduate athlete signing a contract with an agent in violation of NCAA rules, thus becoming ineligible to participate in college athletics, yet are constitutionally entitled to play in the NFL.

Unless the NCAA changes its rules, the NCAA membership must act in concert. Many companies insist a prospective employee sign a contract agreeing to certain conditions of employment. This often includes agreements not to compete against the company for a reasonable time, if the employee leaves.

A university has the right, when offering scholarships, to ask prospective athletes to sign a contract agreeing to abide by all NCAA rules, including the rule about not signing with agents while on scholarship or still with undergraduate eligibility.

In other words, the student-athlete agrees not to play for anyone else (including professionals) while on scholarship unless released by the school. This would allow for transfers.

Also, walkons should also sign an agreement prior to being allowed to play.

Thus, the NFL could refuse to let an athlete such as Cris Carter of Ohio State play or be drafted since he

would still have eligibility left even though he isn't allowed to play because he violated his contract and NCAA rules.

Thomas Conlon
Grand Island, Neb.

GO WITH TALENT

Dear Huskers:

In reference to your recent story about Tom Osborne and other head coaches choosing between inexperienced but talented football players as opposed to veterans of lesser skill, I'd disagree with Osborne's approach. The Huskers are in a position, with their outstanding depth and talent, where they can gamble occasionally with a kid who's got super talent, especially quickness and speed.

Mike Croel is an example, and I would also suggest Leodis Flowers at I-back and Nate Turner at wingback. I feel Nebraska would be better off by going with a best-player approach, and I don't want to insult our fine walkons. But when it comes to pushing Nebraska over the edge to the national title, I just think it's better to go with talent and speed than good-old-boy consistency. Also, I would like to see the Huskers blitz more on defense.

Sandy Kilpatrick
Fort Wayne, Ind.

TAYLOR'S THE KEY

Dear Huskers:

The story on Steve Taylor in the yearbook issue said a lot about Taylor, only I'm not sure if that's good or bad. In one way it's comforting to know the Huskers have a supremely confident and competitive quarterback, but on the other hand I can see how Taylor probably has really felt he had to win games all by himself.

And that's not good because football is a team sport. What happens if the rest of the team starts thinking they can only win with Taylor in the game? Taylor is great, and might well win the Heisman and lead NU to a national championship this year, but

there's also a very real chance he could get hurt and miss a lot of games. I can see Taylor wanting to compete so bad he might try to come back before he's fully recovered.

I feel Taylor has put the Missouri quotes behind him, and I don't hold that against him, but I'm still anxious about any football player thinking he has to win games single-handedly, even if he really can.

Chuck Seager
Norfolk, Neb.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Dear Huskers:

I've just about lost my patience with these wild-eyed idealists at the NCAA and a lot of major universities who keep forcing more and more restrictions on athletic departments as if these sports-related entities were do-

ing something wrong. On the contrary, athletic departments across America seem to be doing things quite right, and they're being rewarded with everything from bowl games, to Final Four appearances, TV revenue and avalanches of media exposure for the lucky schools.

What is *wrong* with that? That sounds good to me. So, what if a kid isn't much smarter than the pen I'm writing with? In our capitalistic world, athletic performance and mass media entertainment are rewarded nicely, and it has absolutely nothing to do with a young man's degree, grade point average or class attendance. The academic community seems jealous of sports success and has decided the only solution is to drag college athletics back down to their plodding, backward and slow-to-change quagmire.

Why not stop fighting a "good" thing and do something positive about their own world of academics? There's no reason on earth why a college education shouldn't be an exciting, highly prized and fun experience. That's what college football is. If you want people to get excited about grade point averages, degrees and studying, then reward those things accordingly. Make it a thrill, make it a gas, make it a high to go to college and excel.

My college memories are dear and wonderful to me, and I am very appreciative of what I gained there, but I would also like to see academicians wake up to the reality that college football is a marvelous thing and they should be encouraging it instead of restricting it. I don't think it is such a drastic measure, should our university heads come to wit's end with sports, to simply sever all relationships with their athletic departments. I also don't think there's much doubt which of the two enterprises would suffer the most.

Paul Ryan
Phoenix, Ariz.

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Shootout at the Kickoff Classic

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 1988, BRODERICK THOMAS EAGERLY AWAITS HIS REUNION WITH JOHN ROPER OF TEXAS A&M, BUT THE AGGIES HAVE MORE THAN JUST GREAT LINEBACKERS.

For Broderick Thomas, Nebraska's season-opener against Texas A&M in the Kickoff Classic will be a reunion of sorts.

The Aggies' roster is laden with Texans, many of them from the sprawling, talent-rich Houston metropolitan area, which Thomas calls home. The Cornhuskers' senior outside linebacker attended Houston's Madison High, where he competed against John Roper and several other Aggies.

"I know most of them," Thomas

says.

Even the ones he doesn't know "know who I am," he says.

When you grow up in Houston, you get tired of hearing about two college football programs, according to Thomas. Oklahoma and Texas A&M.

His competitive dislike for the Sooners is well-documented. And he has a similar distaste for the Aggies.

That's why Thomas is eagerly anticipating the night of Aug. 27 at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. Texas A&M had better come

"strapped up" and ready to play, he says.

The Aggies, of course, will. And they'll be talented as well as ready.

"A&M has great players," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne says. "And they really don't go much outside of about a 400-mile radius to recruit them."

College Station, where the A&M campus is located, is less than a two-hour drive from Houston.

"They'll go out in west Texas a little bit, but that's about as far as they

go," says Osborne. "Most of their recruiting is done in the Houston area, where there are so many good players, tremendous athletes.

"They've done the best job (of recruiting) of anyone in the Southwest Conference the last four or five years. They'll be a tremendous test for us."

Osborne's estimation of Texas A&M's recent recruiting success can be confirmed by looking at the annual rankings of Max Emfinger, a nationally recognized recruiting analyst based in Houston. The Aggies' 1986 recruiting class was No. 1 in the nation in Emfinger's "Fabulous 15" and second in his power ratings.

A&M's 1985 recruiting class ranked eighth and 10th, respectively, while last year's class — this year's freshmen — ranked 14th and 21st.

A&M has seven players who were *Parade Magazine* high school All-Americans, including quarterbacks Lance Pavlas and Chris Osgood, both of whom may be backing up Bucky Richardson, considered the top high school quarterback in Louisiana his senior year.

Richardson, a sophomore from Baton Rouge, started five games last season, all of them victories. He was the Southwest Conference Newcomer of the Year, according to the *San Antonio Light* newspaper and the Most Valuable Offensive Player in the Aggies' 35-10 victory over Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl. He rushed for 423 yards on 62 carries, an average of 6.8 yards per attempt. About his only weakness is passing. He completed just 16 of 65, 35.6 percent.

Pavlas, a sophomore from Tomball, Texas, was the Aggies' most accurate passer last season, completing 41 of 83 (49.4 percent) passes for 451 yards and two touchdowns.

Osgood sat out last season after transferring from the University of Mississippi, where he started seven games in two years. He'll be a junior.

Pavlas is considered a more effective passer than Osgood, who has a stronger arm and maybe a better combination of passing and running skills than either of his rivals for the starting job.

"My problem is, the only thing I've

done at A&M is look in a playbook," Osgood said during spring drills. "Bucky and Lance have done it on the field against actual competition. The only advantages for me are my age and experience. But I'm trying to use those tactics to the best of my ability.

"My expectation is that, eventually, I'll be the No. 1 quarterback. I'm a true believer. I want to accomplish the maximum. But if I fall short, that's not the end of the world."

Pavlas, who was rumored to be considering a transfer, has taken a similar approach to the three-way battle to be the starter.

"Whoever helps the team best will play," he says. "If that's me, fine. I'll be ready. If not, you have to accept what life gives you."

A&M Coach Jackie Sherrill, preparing for his seventh season in College Station, acknowledges: "We'll probably have one (quarterback) that'll end up playing a lot more than the others. But we won't hesitate to use any of them in the right situation.

"All three of them will win some ball games for us," he says. "I like the flexibility it gives us because it's very difficult (for opponents) to go into a ballgame and say, 'Let's get ready for a drop-back quarterback.'

"The public sentiment is, 'I wish they only had one.' At least that way, it would be clear-cut. But we're comfortable with three."

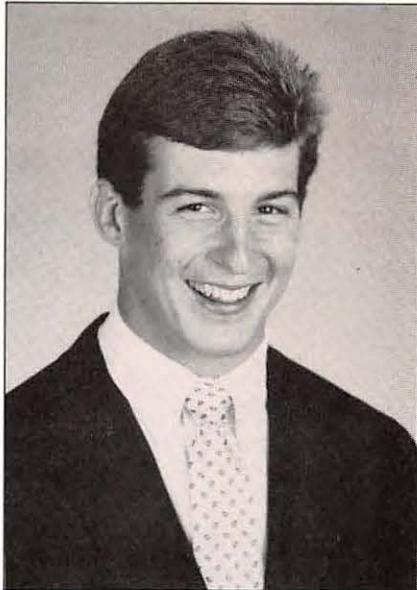
Any way you look at it, A&M's quarterback picture is complete. Sherrill is convinced the Aggies can win with any of the three.

A&M has a new offensive coordinator, Joe Avezzano, Sherrill's offensive line coach, who was promoted after Lynn Amadee left to take a similar job at the University of Florida.

Ron Turner, formerly the quarterback and receivers coach at USC, was hired to coach the Aggie quarterbacks.

Turner calls Richardson the strongest runner of the quarterbacks, which probably gives him an edge in A&M's run-oriented, option offense.

The Aggies are loaded with running backs, among them Darren Lewis, the Southwest Conference



Bucky Richardson has the best blend of running and passing among the top three Aggie quarterbacks.

Newcomer of the Year and a second-team all-conference selection. He also received Associated Press All-America honorable mention.

Lewis, who rushed for a team-high 668 yards and eight touchdowns, was a *Parade* All-American at Dallas Carter High and was ranked as the No. 1 high school running back in the country by Emfinger. Nebraska's coaches are well aware of Lewis' abilities. He was heavily recruited by the Cornhuskers.

A&M's running game doesn't depend entirely on Lewis, though. Far from it.

Larry Horton, another sophomore, was considered one of the top running backs in Texas his senior year at Tatum High, as was Sugarland's Keith McAfee, who redshirted as a freshman.

Senior Matt Gurley, described by A&M sports information assistant Colin Killian as a "bread and butter" fullback, gained 379 yards and scored five touchdowns in nine games last year. He was thrown for only nine yards in losses on nearly 100 carries.

Gurley, however, could be pushed out of his starting job by Randy Simmons, a redshirted freshman from McKinney, Tex. Simmons was a *Parade* All-American, rated the top prep fullback in the country as a senior.



The 6-foot-2, 215-pounder has been compared to former Texas All-American Earl Campbell.

Simmons sat out last season because of a knee injury. But he's apparently none the worse for wear. "Toward the end of spring practice, he started to look like the coaches always thought he would," says Killian.

The Aggies also have Gerald Mitchell, a former high school teammate of Nebraska's Kenny Walker, and Robert Wilson eligible as running backs, after sitting out last season.

In other words, A&M is loaded with talented running backs, "about 10 of 'em," says Charlie McBride, the Cornhuskers' defensive coordinator.

"We should know. I think we tried to recruit every one of them."

The key will be whether Avezzano can rebuild an offensive line to open some holes for all those young backs.

The Aggies lost four regulars in the line, including their center.

"The worst position that hurts you is center. It's more important to have one center than one quarterback," according to Sherrill.

He may have that center in sophomore Mike Arthur, yet another *Parade* All-American, from Houston's Spring

Some say outside linebacker Aaron Wallace (23) may be better than All-American John Roper.

Woods High, where he was a teammate of Nebraska's John Roschal.

Chris Work, also a sophomore, should make the Aggies two-deep at center.

Senior Jerry Fontenot has played center, as well as tackle and guard, where he was second-team all-conference last season. The 6-4, 260-pound Fontenot, who's from Lafayette, La., is regarded as one of the best all-around athletes on the team. He's an All-American candidate.

Matt McCall, still another *Parade* All-American (from Lufkin, Tex.), started the Cotton Bowl game at tackle against Notre Dame as a freshman. At 6-8, 295 pounds, he's definitely a force.

Among A&M's other experienced linemen on offense are juniors Bill

Cavanaugh, 6-4, 260, and Richmond Webb, 6-7, 260, and sophomore Mike Pappas, 6-2, 250.

The Aggies figure to be three-deep at tight end, where they have two-year lettermen Brian Ross and Wally Hartley, and Mike Jones, a transfer from Sacramento, Calif., Junior College.

Even though A&M's offense isn't conducive to flashy passing stats, the Aggies have some flashy receivers, including senior Rod Harris, junior Percy Waddle and sophomore Gary Oliver.

Harris, who also returns kicks, caught 19 passes for 281 yards and two touchdowns last fall and was first-team All-Southwest Conference.

Harris averaged 10.6 yards per punt return last season, setting a school single-game record against Louisiana Tech, with 123 punt return yards. He followed that with 108 yards in returns against Arkansas, including one of 66 yards for a touchdown.

Oh yes. "He had a phenomenal spring," according to Killian. Early in his college career, some people thought Harris was overrated. No more.

Waddle — yes, a *Parade* All-American from Columbus, Tex. — be-

gan to show the skills last season that made him one of the most recruited high school receivers in the country.

When A&M's offense sputters, senior Scott Slater is available for field goals. For the second season in a row he was first-team all-conference, leading the Aggies in scoring. *The Sporting News* ranks him among the Top 10 placekickers in the country.

A&M's defense, which calls itself the "Wrecking Crew," ranked seventh in the nation last fall, led by Roper, a consensus All-American who had a remarkable 15 quarterback sacks. He was credited with 104 tackles. He pressured the passer 11 times, deflected three passes, caused two fumbles, and recovered a fumble.

Another of the Aggies' "Blitz Brothers" is junior linebacker Aaron Wallace, who had 12 quarterback sacks and caused five fumbles.

Adam Bob, the outstanding defensive player in the 1988 Cotton Bowl, Dana Batiste, considered as good as any of them by Nebraska's Thomas, and Basil Jackson are the other linebackers.

According to *The Sporting News*, which rates A&M's linebacking corps the best in the nation, the "combination of Roper and Wallace is without peer."

They'll operate behind a line that figures to include some combination of senior Leon Cole, junior Terry Price, and sophomores Jayson Black and Jeff Huff, all of whom have experience.

The secondary is built around junior cornerback Alex Morris, who received All-America honorable mention from the Associated Press last season.

Among the other key defensive backs are corners Gary Jones, Mickey Washington and Tony Jones, and safeties Brent Smith and William Thomas.

Based on spring drills, A&M's punter will be sophomore Sean Wilson, the son of former Kansas City Chiefs' punter Gerald Wilson.

The Aggies have represented the Southwest Conference in the Cotton Bowl the last three seasons and are expected to make another run at it.

In each of those three seasons, they've won at least nine games, even though they lost their opener. In fact, Sherrill has won only one opener since he arrived at College Station. A&M squeaked by an inferior Texas-El Paso team 20-17 in 1984.

"We've got a reputation for starting slow and building to a peak," says Kilian. "I guess Coach Sherrill emphasizes the conference more."

But Sherrill wouldn't have accepted an invitation to play in the Kickoff Classic if he didn't think the Aggies were capable of reversing the trend.

"We're just hopeful we'll be in the position to be in the hunt again," Sherrill says.

You know it's more than hope. A&M is talented. Just ask Thomas, who can't wait for Aug. 27.

It's going to be a big reunion. ■



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Practice outdoors.

Isn't the Nebraska basketball program supposed to be progressing under the direction of Coach Danny Nee?

Well, surprisingly enough, the Cornhuskers did practice outdoors once, near the end of May, and that practice was an indication of just how far — literally and figuratively — Nee has taken his program, which is now beginning its third year.



Richard van Poelgeest (layup) could have gotten bent out of shape because of this crooked rim in Australia, but the Huskers adapted.

The practice was held on a concrete schoolyard court in Newcastle, Australia, during Nebraska's exhibition tour of Australia and New Zealand.

The Cornhuskers were scheduled for a practice in the school's gymnasium, but its floor was so slick, the first time center Rich King ran down the court, he slipped and fell. Nee immediately suggested the team move outside.

Even though at least one rim was

badly bent and didn't have a net, Nebraska made the best of the situation.

It benefitted from the experience.

One night, the Cornhuskers played a game in a gym that was so cold "you could see your breath. People (in the stands) had their coats on," Nee says.

But he's not complaining about that, either. In each case, the players had to adapt to their environment, a definite plus from the two-week tour.

They were exposed to the self-discipline necessary for success in athletics at the major college level. They learned to make decisions and prepare themselves to play.

Prior to departing Lincoln for Sydney, Australia and the first leg of the trip, Nee said, "I'm not babysitting. If they don't want to eat, they don't have to eat. If they don't want to get up, they don't have to get up. But they'd better be ready when the bus leaves. We've got a couple of things organized academically. Otherwise, they're on their own."

And that's the way it was.

For example, "we very seldom had pre-game meals, so the kids had to fend for themselves," Nee says. "They were given money (a food allowance) and had to decide what they were going to eat and when they were going to eat.

"Like our big kids, guys like Rich King and Beau Reid; they're constantly eating. They have tremendous appetites and probably consume 6,000 or more calories a day at the training table. You go out and try to

buy that many calories at restaurants and you don't have enough money. You'd have to eat four portions of everything."

How does one deal with that? By being more selective in what he eats.

Nee didn't invoke curfews. Again, the players took responsibility for themselves. His only requirement was that they be ready to play.

"Like coming back after a game at night and going to bed right away or icing down a sore knee or a sore ankle," he says. "Nobody was going to do it for them. And when they didn't do things right, it affected their play. That was really significant. You can't teach things like that. It forced them to adjust quickly to situations."

"On the New Zealand leg of the trip, we traveled and played, traveled and played, and on each stop they had to prepare themselves. There was nothing I could do for them. It was bing, bang, boom, get ready to go."

The Cornhuskers returned from the trip Down Under more mature, something that should be evident when preseason practice begins in mid-October.

"We're young but all that stuff can't be an excuse anymore. It's time for us to make a move," says Nee.

"These kids have to reach their potential. Somehow, we (coaches) just have to bring it out."

The coaches and players learned a lot about each other and drew closer together on the trip. Dealing with adversity, in particular, as well as simple inconvenience can solidify interpersonal relationships.

Australia and New Zealand are "great countries," Nee says.

But he wouldn't want to live in either. The trip made him and his players "appreciate things like the Devaney Center and hot showers. It made us realize how good we have it."

No one in the Nebraska entourage appreciated landing in Los Angeles on the return trip more than Pete Manning.

"I almost didn't make it back to the States. It was looking real bad there for a while," says Manning.

Although he attended high school in Trenton, N.J., which he now lists

Forward/center Pete Manning cut through red tape that almost prevented his return.



as home, Manning was born in Jamaica, and he forgot to take his Green Card, evidence of his immigration to the United States. Without a Green Card, U.S. Immigration officials in Honolulu, Hawaii, wouldn't have allowed him to board the flight to Los Angeles.

Manning's predicament didn't become apparent until the team arrived in New Zealand, and it wasn't resolved until the last possible minute, after the office of Nebraska Senator David Karnes set up a conference call with the State Department in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Immigration office in New York.

Tom Simons, Nebraska's associate sports information director who went on the trip, made numerous unsuccessful attempts to secure the necessary papers for Manning before, in desperation and at the suggestion of Assistant Athletic Director and Sports Information Director Don Bryant back in Lincoln, Karnes' office was contacted.

As a result of the conference call, Manning was able to obtain the papers necessary for re-entry into the United States, through the U.S. Consulate in Auckland, New Zealand.

"It was right down to the wire for

Pete, Danny and me," Simons says.

Nebraska's flight from Honolulu to Los Angeles had to be held for Manning, Nee and Simons while Manning's papers were checked by immigration officials.

Manning also didn't have a visa to get into New Zealand from Australia and wouldn't have been allowed in that country if officials there hadn't been willing to accept Continental Airlines' assurance Manning would be on a flight to the United States later in the week.

"I wasn't sure we were going to get back until we got off the plane (in Los Angeles)," Simons says.

"It felt good when we finally got back here," says Manning.

Richard van Poelgeest, who's from The Netherlands, returned to the United States on a tourist visa that he had used for his recruiting visit to Nebraska because he had forgotten his student visa in Lincoln.

The tourist visa was supposed to be used only once and was good only if presented with a return ticket, in van Poelgeest's case to The Netherlands, which he, of course, didn't have.

The immigration officials "must have been in a good mood," says Simons.

The Cornhuskers may have avoided a significant amount of bad luck on the trip by missing a Friday the 13th in May. They left Lincoln on May 12, a Thursday, crossed the International Dateline, and arrived in Sydney, Australia, on May 14, a Saturday.

Manning, who shot 59 percent from the field last season to edge out Kansas' Danny Manning for the best in the Big Eight, and King each scored 26 points in the last of the Cornhuskers' eight games on the tour, a 124-89 victory over Abbeys Mazda Northland, a club team, in Whangarei, New Zealand.

That capped a four-game winning streak and gave Nebraska a 5-3 record.

Manning also grabbed 16 rebounds.

The 6-foot-8 senior "had moments of really showing the offensive power he showed in the Oklahoma game (when he scored 27 points)," says Nee.

"A couple of nights, Pete just went

off and dominated." In those games, "his rebounding was unbelievable. He had some turnovers and things, but they're correctable. His rebounding and offensive power were really solid."

Eric Johnson, the team's only other senior, was chosen by his teammates captain for the upcoming season.

"I was very pleased with Eric. I thought he showed excellent leadership and consistency, offensively and defensively," Nee says, comparing him to the New York Knicks' Mark Jackson, the NBA Rookie of the Year.

"Eric had to make sure the right people got the ball, make sure he still got his points, make sure we ran the break, and make sure we played the pressure defense. We thought Eric made giant strides," says Nee.

Van Poelgeest, a 6-9 junior, was bothered by a sore knee on the trip. Even so, he developed as a role player, according to Nee. "He carries out his assignments, sets good picks, re-

bounds and executes the plays," Nee says.

Van Poelgeest left for The Netherlands the day after Nebraska got back to Lincoln to join the Dutch National team to begin preparing for the Olympics.

Sophomores King, Reid and Clifford Scales, "the future of Nebraska basketball," according to Nee, all matured on the Australia trip.

The 7-2 King reaffirmed what Nee already knew. "When he gets himself ready to play, he can be as good as anybody. Rich showed tremendous improvement in his offense, his rebounding and his assists — he passed extremely well," Nee says.

Reid scored 37 points in the Cornhuskers' first victory on the trip, 124-86 over the Gippsland Lakers in Traralgon, Australia. He got 22 of the points in the first half. "Beau had nights where he demonstrated tremendous offensive power," says

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"He's definitely a three-point threat. He was taking the ball to the basket. He's becoming more consistent in all phases of the game, tremendous passing, aggressive, physical defense.

"And he cut down on his turnovers."

Scales "got off to a very slow start," but he came on strong as the tour progressed. The 6-2 guard from Westchester, Ill., hit both ends of a one-and-one free throw opportunity with one second remaining to give the Cornhuskers a 103-101 victory over Altos Auckland in the sixth game.

Scales led Nebraska in scoring that night with 22 points.

Clifford made the adjustments. His shooting came around," says Nee, who attributed Scales' slow start, in part, to the fact that he had to guard a veteran Olympian on the Australian National team the first two games.

Once he got going, "he was super."

Only three other players went on the trip: Jed Bargen, who was sidelined by an ankle injury suffered in the first game, and walkons Matt Svehla and Todd Koca, both of whom "did a respectable job" off the bench, Nee says.

Kelly Lively, a redshirted freshman from Torrington, Wyo., didn't make the trip to Australia and New Zealand. Instead, he represented Nebraska on a Big Eight team that played in England and Czechoslovakia.

Oklahoma State's Leonard Hamilton coached the team.

Although the 6-11 Lively saw limited action, Nee hoped the trip would give him "a sense of identity" as well as an idea of "what it's going to take to play in the Big Eight."

Some members of a highly rated recruiting class may get a chance to find out, first-hand, what it takes to compete in the Big Eight this season. The Cornhuskers' recruits are good enough that Nee says he's "sure a couple of them can come in and contribute (immediately)."

Nebraska's class, ranked 24th in the nation by *Basketball Weekly*, includes: Dapreis Owens, a 6-8 power forward from Mansfield, Ohio; Lewis Geter, a

6-6 quick forward from Columbus, Ohio; Carl Hayes, a 6-6 quick forward from Westchester, Ill.; Eric Dolezal, a 6-3 guard from Laporte; and Ray Richardson, a 6-6 swing player from South Bend, Ind., by way of Hiwassee Junior College in Madisonville, Tenn.

In addition, 6-1 J.F. Hoffman, an outstanding basketball and football

player at Cambridge (Neb.) High School, has indicated he will walk on and try to earn a spot on the team.

Van Coleman, who publishes the *National Recruiter's Cage Letter*, rates all four of the high school scholarship recruits among the top 50 or so in the nation at their positions.

"We've never had this type of player," says Nee. ■

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Reach Out and Crush Someone

WHEN FOUR OF AMERICA'S BEST LINEBACKERS, INCLUDING LEROY ETIENNE AND BRODERICK THOMAS, VISITED ON THE PHONES RECENTLY, THE LINES MELTED.



1988 may well be the Year of the Linebacker in college football, and Nebraska fans will see two great ones, Broderick Thomas and LeRoy Etienne, every week. But in the Kick-off Classic and in the L.A. Coliseum, Husker fans will also watch two opponents who've made almost every preseason All-American chart: John Roper of Texas A&M and UCLA's Carnell Lake.

The Aggies have the No. 1 linebacking corps in America, according to *The Sporting News*, and UCLA holds the No. 5 spot. Nebraska, however, wasn't mentioned, even though Thomas rates as a favorite for the Lombardi and Butkus awards and Etienne has been rated the No. 3 inside linebacker in America.

Recently, they got together on a conference call with *Huskers Illustrated* to discuss football and linebacking. Talk about contrasts. Thomas and Roper are jive-talkin' buddies since high school, even though Roper played for the team Thomas hated the most, Yates H.S. Both have a way with words. With four accomplished and confident football players with much in common, you'd expect some good-natured chest pounding and macho posturing, but UCLA's Lake was the torchbearer for modesty, even though he did slip in a couple of subtle gotchas.

Often Lake and Etienne seemed on the outside of the Thomas-Roper inside jokes. And they *are* different. Etienne is the only inside linebacker while the other three play outside. Lake is a speed merchant who plays within UCLA's finesse linebacking system, which compares with the

dominatin'-intimidatin' style of the other three. Lake comes across as smooth, almost shy, while the others use deep, thundering voices and can pass for hired killers. Lake and Etienne are more inclined to give studied, serious answers while Roper and Thomas shoot first and ask what the question was later. Thomas' clowning generally kept Roper in stitches during the 30-minute interview.

However, this phone call featured more than just wisecracking. There was an unmistakable mutual respect, a common bond that only accomplished athletes can relate to. It's easy to imagine. If these four linebackers stay healthy and reach their potential, it's quite possible Husker fans will at some point see the 1988 Butkus award winner. The only question is, who will it be?

Operator 653: Mr. Lake is on the conference call now.

Lake: Hi, Mark.

HI: Hello Carnell, how are you today?

Lake: All right.

HI: How's the weather in L.A.?

Lake: Oh, it's about mid-80s, but we have a little breeze. It's kinda hot.

Operator 653: Mr. John Roper for a conference call please.

HI: Is John there?

Roper: Yup, I'm here.

HI: How's it going, John?

Roper: Just fine.

HI: John, we're on the line with Carnell Lake. Are you familiar with Carnell?

Roper: (pause) UCLA?

HI: Right.

Lake: How's it going, John?

Roper: All Right.

Operator 653: Mr. LeRoy Etienne is on the line, sir.

Etienne: Hey, Mark, how're you doin'?

HI: Fine, thanks, LeRoy, what are you up to?

Etienne: Just trying to cook up some dinner right now.

HI: Cook?

Etienne: Yeah, Southern style.

HI: We're on the line with Carnell Lake and...

Etienne: Hi, Carnell. How do you

like it, homeboy, we're the top linebackers in the country.

Lake: I know. Congratulations, man.

Etienne: Thanks to you, man. (Background noise) Is that Mr. Roper?

Roper: That's me, the only one.

Thomas: (unannounced) Hey! the Sandman wants to talk to you.

Roper: Sandman!

Thomas: What's up, Rope, what's up?

Operator 653: Mr. Thomas?

Thomas: What? Hello? Excuse me.

Operator 653: Would you mind answering a roll call for me please to make sure you can hear each other all right? Mr. Carnell Lake?

Lake: Here.

Operator 653: John Roper?

Roper: Yo.

Operator 653: LeRoy Etienne?

Etienne: Yeah.

Operator 653: And Broderick Thomas?

Thomas: In color.

Operator 653: Thank you for...

Roper: (interrupting) Sandman!

Thomas: What's up?

Roper: It's the Rope.

Thomas: What's up, Judge?

Roper: What's up, Sandman?

Thomas: Chillin', man. What's up, Lake?

Lake: What's up there?

Thomas: Chillin', bro. It's about that time. It's showtime.

HI: And so it is. Let's get to the business of football, gentlemen. The dictionary has a pretty simple definition of "linebacker," something about a football player who lines up behind the line and makes tackles up the middle and defends against short passes. Not very in-depth. Since you guys are probably four of the best linebackers in America, what's your definition of 'linebacker?'" Carnell?

Lake: The definition you gave is too short. A linebacker has many of the characteristics of all players. He's partly a DB (defensive back). He has to be a down lineman. He has to be agile like a receiver. He doesn't just cover people short, he has to go deep, one-on-one with the tight end. And he also has to be strong. More than anything he has to have the right

mental attitude.

HI: Which is?

Lake: There are so many things that a linebacker goes through in a game, that he has to be ready for *any* situation.

HI: LeRoy, what's your definition of the perfect linebacker?

Etienne: I play inside linebacker. And as far as my responsibilities are concerned, it's being able to recognize offensive sets, and make sure everyone is in the right place at the right time. I've got a big responsibility as far as the mental concept of the game is concerned. But as far as ability goes, you've got to be able to be very agile, you've got to cover backs out of the backfield. You've also got to be able to *crush!* That's the whole idea. That's my whole objective. Play tough and aggressive. And if I continue to do that, then I will be a success.

HI: I can imagine. John, it's your turn. How would you describe a great linebacker?

Roper: Dirty! Nasty. Funky. Don't care.

Thomas: Aaahhh! You sound like my kinda boy!

Roper: To destroy. To cause havoc. To sack. That's the definition of a linebacker.

HI: I see. Broderick, your turn.

Thomas: Just look for the Sandman.

Roper: (laughs)

HI: That's it?

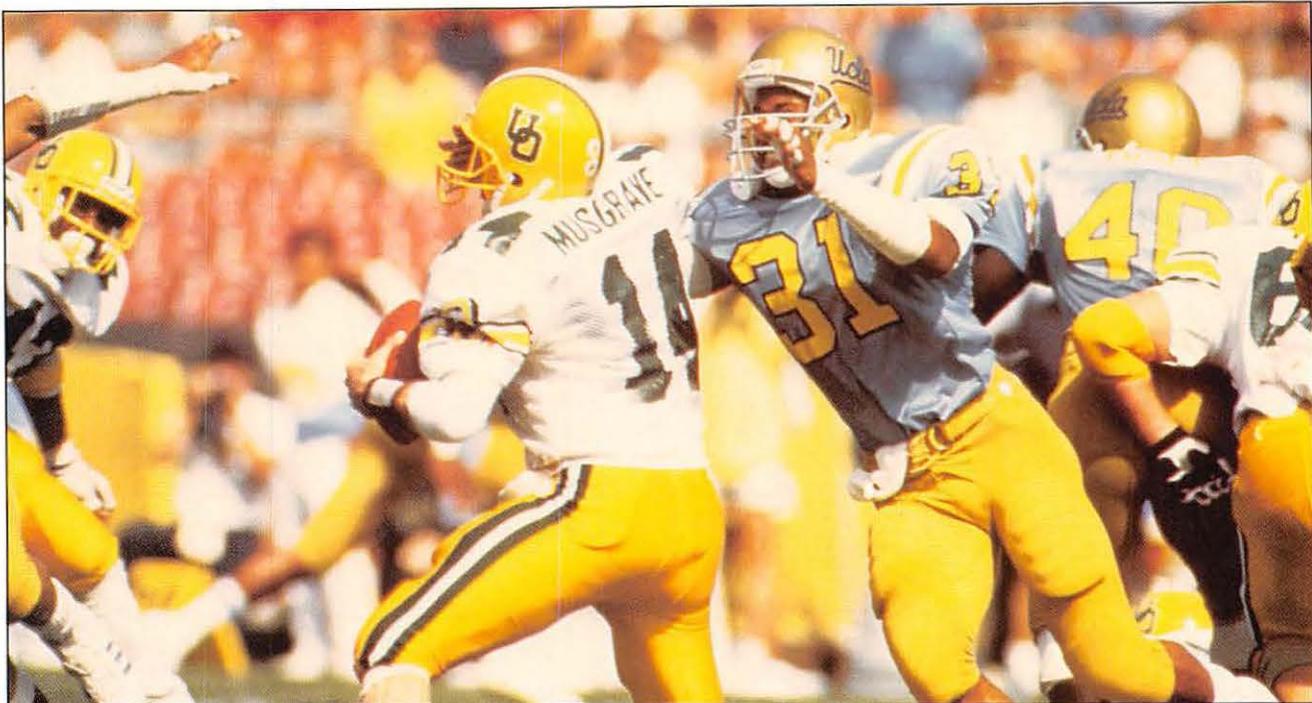
Thomas: The Sandman. Solid as a rock. That's it.

HI: Okay.

Thomas: Be like me. Just say, "I'll prevail. I'll be the reigning, undisputed outside linebacker." It's nothin' but a job. We grew up like this. Roper understands. We played against each other in high school. It's been hard. I came from the bottom, and I play like I'm still at the bottom on my way to the top, so that just describes the Sandman.

HI: Some pretty good definitions there. But what about you four? What are your personal strengths? How about weaknesses or things you're still working on?

Lake: Starting out with strong



points, my main strong point is speed...

Roper: (interrupting) What's your 40?

Lake: This spring they timed me in a 4.42.

Roper: Oh.

HI: What about you, John?

Thomas: Hold on, he weighs like 210, though, right?

Lake: I don't weigh that much. I'm 204.

Thomas: Oh, *man!*

HI: John, what do you run?

Roper: (laughing) I run a 4.5.

Thomas: Come on, Rope.

Roper: That's legit. A 4.56.

HI: LeRoy, the inside linebacker, what do you run these days?

Etienne: 4.63.

(someone whistles)

HI: Broderick?

Thomas: Sandman — 4.53 at 250 pounds.

Roper: (laughs)

HI: Carnell, what were you saying about strong points and weak points?

Lake: The next best attribute I have is agility. I've been working out with some of the DBs on the team, and that's helped out.

HI: Cornerbacks or safeties?

Lake: Cornerbacks.

Linebacker Carnell Lake (31) of UCLA is faster and smoother than most halfbacks.

rely on is my instinct. My peripheral vision and quickness. And I rely a lot on my power.

HI: Broderick, strong points, weak points?

Thomas: I don't have many weak points. The strongest part of my game is against the run. And the blitz. Also, just being big and fast. I'm naturally strong. I'm not weight-room strong. Weights might be my weakness. But no one would ever know because I'm naturally strong. Using my speed. I just go out and hit people and enjoy talkin' to 'em.

HI: One magazine, *The Sporting News*, rated the best linebacking corps in college football...

Roper: Oh man, that was cool.

Thomas: Hey, Rope?

Roper: Ye!

Thomas: Now, you know they lied, don't you?

Roper: I don't know about that, Judge.

Thomas: You know they lied.

HI: You know that means...

Thomas: (interrupting) Hold on. Let's straighten that out. You've only got one good linebacker, okay? That's you, okay?

Roper: Hey, we've got four — four good linebackers.

Thomas: Four? Where? I don't see 'em.

Roper: (laughs)

HI: Gentlemen...

Roper: How do you think we got to the bowl?

Thomas: You don't want to force some action down there, Judge. Your boy, Batiste, runs his mouth. Whoever No. 23 is, he's no good either. All he does is blitz, brother. He can't play ball.

Roper: Oh, come on.

Thomas: I'll tell you straight, brother, the best linebacker corps is at Nebraska right now, okay? I wouldn't lie to you.

HI: And that does bring up our point...

Thomas: (interrupting) Hey, hold on, hold on. We're on the phone with four of the best linebackers in the country, right?

HI: Uh-huh.

Thomas: And two are for Nebraska, right?

HI: Uh-huh.

Thomas: Case closed.

Roper: (laughs)

Thomas: Carnell, am I lyin'?

Lake: (laughs) You're saying that two of the best are over at Nebraska.

Thomas: That's what I said, Judge.

HI: Okay, guys, *The Sporting News* as a matter of record did rate A&M No. 1, UCLA No. 5, and they did not rank Nebraska...

Roper: At all?

HI: At all. But to help explain those ratings, let's talk about each school and what their linebackers do. John, how would describe the A&M linebacker system and how you fit in?

Roper: Well, as far as where I fit in, I'm mainly just there to make sure things don't get outside. I leave it for the rest of the guys to do the work. But I do my job, so I get a little piece of the action. And as far as the linebacking corps goes, the newspaper says we're the No. 1 linebacking corps, so that's how it'll stand.

Thomas: (quiet) Is that right?

Roper: That's right, Jack.

Thomas: Rope...like I told you and Jackie, you gotta come see us August 27, boy.

Roper: (laughs)

HI: Carnell. The same question.

Lake: The main thing about the backers at UCLA is coordination. If everybody can do their job well, according to their position, everything just falls into place. My role in keeping things under control is just to do my job.

HI: For Nebraska, LeRoy, can you explain how the outside and inside linebackers mesh? And, Broderick, you can add to that.

Etienne: I want to make two points. The first point is, our program is so complex. Everyone out there has a responsibility. We can't go out there and take charge and just take off for the ball carrier. We have a very complex system where everybody has a responsibility, which is a strong point for both Broderick and I because we have the opportunity to work on our mental skills as well as our physical skills. Nebraska is basically an all-around concept team. And the second

point I'd like to make is that I look at *The Sporting News*, and I want a chance at the Dick Butkus award. (Note: Etienne was not listed as one of the magazine's Top 10 candidates for the honor.) But that's all right. I tell you what, if I don't win it, I'll be a one-two contender for it. The Butkus is mine.

Roper: Uh-oh!

HI: Broderick, what would you do if LeRoy won the Butkus?

Thomas: I'm not gonna say anything, but I tell you what, my name's No. 1 on both trophies, Judge, and neither one's gonna get by...

Etienne: Hey, Broderick, it's gonna be like this — you get the Lombardi, and I'll get the Butkus.

Thomas: Hey, that would be cool, too, but like I said, neither one of those trophies is gonna walk by me. I'm not that concerned about the trophies. If I do my job, and me and LeRoy take Nebraska where we think

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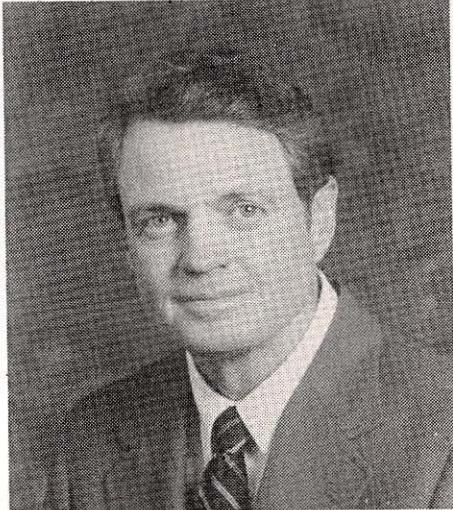
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we can go, no problem — the trophies belong to us.

HI: Moving right along, you've all had great careers so far. Thinking back, what's the best hit, or best play you've made that brings back fond memories? Carnell?

Lake: I got a hit on a Fresno State running back who caught a screen out near the boundary, and I got past two linemen, and when he turned I hit him off his feet and he lost three or four yards.

Roper: Let me see, I guess it must have been the LSU game. What's his name? Hodson? The quarterback. Hodson? Whoever he is. The quarterback, that's all I know (laughs). Hmm, yeah I was on a blitz and got him about 10 yards in the backfield.

Thomas: My sophomore year, fourth-and-one against Florida State. That's when I knew what I was capable of. I didn't get to start till the week before the game. I had about six big

plays that night, and they were all about fourth-and-one.

Etienne: Probably one of my biggest games was against Okie when I fought off about two blocks. Anthony Stafford was in an open-field situation, and he had a lot of speed, so I just broke down and made a complete open-field tackle. It wasn't a pretty hit or anything, it was just a little bit of agility on my part.

HI: Let's talk about the mental and emotional sides of football, too. You're on a Saturday morning, getting ready to play. How do you put on your game face?

Etienne: It's pretty easy, Mark, it really is. Football is something I really enjoy. I'm only happy when I play ball. Once I put my cleats on and I've got my artillery on, it's time to go to work. No more, no less. I don't care about all my outside business. I don't have to pay bills. I put my girl situations behind. It's time to take care of

myself on the field. And I have a lot of thoughts about the Bible.

Roper: Well, mainly, I just stay to myself. I'll go through the pregame, and all that. And when I put on my uniform it's just time to play. That's it. Say your last prayers, and go out there and play.

Thomas: I wake up. Say my prayers. I think about my mom. Think about where I'm from. I think about how hard it was to get there, just to that point. And I think about the let-down if we were to lose or if I had to give up the game. I turn on my boys, Run DMC.

Roper: (laughs)

Thomas: I listen to a little rap, and I'm on then.

Roper: *Sandman!*

Thomas: That's it. Just listen to the rappin' thing. This year I'm into the Ghetto Boys. That's where we're from. Roper understands that.

Roper: Oh yeah.

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Thomas: They understand where we're from. They sing it like it is. Yeah, I'll probably listen to the Ghetto Boys this year.

Roper: Big Daddy Cane (a song by Run DMC).

Thomas: There you go. That's smooth, too.

HI: Okay. Carnell, your mental preparation?

Lake: I think it's similar to Broderick's. I wake up. Say a prayer. Listen to some music, and try to think about what I can achieve next.

HI: What's the music of choice for linebackers?

Lake: Rap. Probably rap.

HI: John, what do you listen to?

Roper: You know, it's DMC.

HI: LeRoy, what about you?

Etienne: Before a game we listen to music all the time. I like it. I never did it before I got here. I like it. It gets me pumped up. I get up there and dance a little bit. I feel more relaxed. It's like a big old party. Everybody has a good time.

HI: Any particular songs?

Etienne: I'm pretty much into the rap myself.

HI: Any thoughts on the Butkus award or Dick Butkus, the player?

Etienne: To me, the Butkus is a very prestigious award. If you're the Dick Butkus award winner, that tells the pro scouts right there you're the best linebacker at your position, inside or outside. That says a lot. It also says automatically over \$250,000 on your contract!

(laughter)

Etienne: As far as Dick Butkus is concerned, I respect the man greatly. I like his style of play. Very aggressive. Nasty. Snotty attitude type of player. I don't portray him or anything, but I like to have that same type of impact when I play out there.

HI: John, your thoughts on Butkus. Ever see him play?

Roper: (laughs) Yeah, I've seen him play a couple of times. But to me, I just let all of that take care of itself. If I go out there and play like I normally play, great things'll happen.

Lake: The thing that shines about Butkus was his aggressiveness. If any player can be as aggressive as he was

and take the game as seriously as he did, it's hard not to do well.

Thomas: Butkus was a great player, but the thing I really admire about him was his heart and his desire.

HI: Have you guys given much thought to what it's going to be like when you play each other, and there will be so many, multi-talented linebackers on the field?

Thomas: That's one thing most people in America don't understand. To be a great linebacker, you must be one of the better athletes on the field, regardless who's around — running backs, quarterbacks, you name it. We're the best athletes. Period. You look at the pay scale. You look at the draft. When you have good outside linebackers, they go the first or second pick. The only person who can get drafted higher is a quarterback. This is the year of linebackers. This is the year of the greatest linebackers. It's like Lawrence Taylor, Singletary, E.J. Junior and all those guys when they came out. They're known as the catalyst of linebackers now. That's the class of linebackers. This is the next class of linebackers. You got Thomas here, Roper, Lake, Etienne. You got us all.

HI: What would it be like if a college team had three down linemen and four linebackers... and you guys were those four linebackers?

Roper: Judge! Ooo-eee!

Thomas: You'd get somebody killed like that.

Etienne: It'd be a big party.

(laughter)

HI: It would be worth the price of admission. Gentlemen, thanks so much for talking. Any good-byes?

Thomas: Hey, fellas, from the Sandman, peace, good luck, see you at the Butkus finalists banquet. Lake, I'll see you the third game. Roper, it's time to strap the artillery on.

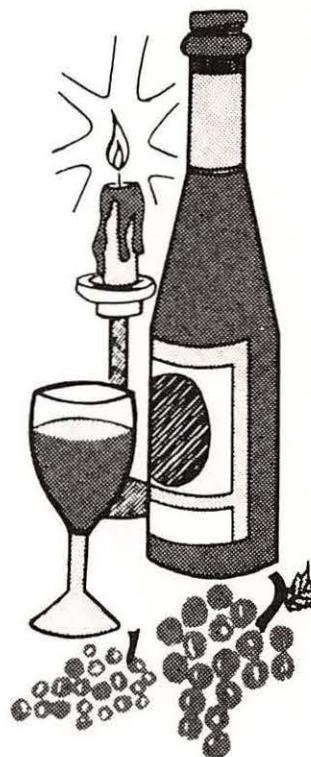
Roper: Good luck, Judge.

Thomas: Do what you do best. Keep your head up, even if your team loses. Let's keep risin' to the top.

Lake: Got it. Talk to you later.

Etienne: Hey fellas, just have fun. Have a good time out there. God bless every last one of you. Just go out and have a good time. ■

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The Nebraska Football Radio Network has expanded to over 40 affiliate stations this season, although more could be added as the Kickoff Classic nears.

Radio stations in Nebraska are: KBRB-1400 in Ainsworth; KCOW-1400 in Alliance; KCNI-1280 in Broken Bow; KZEN-100.3 in Central City; KCSR-610 in Chadron; KTTT-1510 in Columbus; KAMI-104.5

and 1580 in Cozad; KGMT-1310 in Fairbury; KSDZ-95.5 in Gordon; KRG-1430 in Grand Island; KHAS-1230 in Hastings; KGF-1340 in Kearney; KRVN-880 in Lexington; KFOR-1240 in Lincoln; KIMB-1260 in Kimball; KNEN-94.7 in Norfolk; KELN-97.1 in North Platte; KOCA-930 in Ogallala; KFAB-1110 in Omaha; KBRX-1350 in O'Neill; KNLV-1060 in Ord; KOLT-1320 in

Scottsbluff; KSID-1340 in Sidney; KRFS-1600 in Superior; KVSH-940 in Valentine; KTCH-1590 in Wayne; KWPN-840 in West Point; and KAWL-1370 in York.

Stations in other states are: (Iowa) KMNS-620 in Sioux City; (South Dakota) KWYR-1260 in Winner, KYNT-1450 in Yankton, and KTOQ-1340 in Rapid City; (New Mexico) KKIM-1000 in Albuquerque; (Arizona) KCKY-1150 in Coolidge but covering the Phoenix and Tucson broadcast areas; (California) KKSA-1030 in Folsom, KMNY-1600 in Pomona, and KDON-1460 in Salinas; (Kansas) KNSS-1240 in Wichita; (Oregon) KYTE-970 in Portland; plus (Texas) KTBT-700 in Tomball but covering the Houston broadcast area, and KAND-107.9 in Corsicana but covering Dallas.

An updated list will be published in the next issue.

As far as television goes, the Kickoff Classic is slated for 7 p.m. (Central) and will be broadcast by Raycom which will sell the rights to individual TV stations across the nation. The Sept. 10 game with UCLA is set for a 4 p.m. (Central) broadcast by ABC-TV. The Arizona State tilt in Lincoln has been okayed by ESPN, but the kickoff time was unclear at press time. Depending on other games that day, ESPN officials say the Huskers and Sun Devils will either play at 3 or 6 p.m. (Central). A final decision probably won't be made until about two weeks before the game.

CBS holds the option on Oklahoma-Nebraska, and their people say it's a done deal, unofficially, of course.

Only one year after playing six regular-season games on television, the Huskers easily will enjoy four in 1988. To get on the tube any more, Nebraska will need help from its Big Eight rivals. The Oklahoma State and Colorado games were shown last fall, and neither were close. Steve Taylor and Broderick Thomas have national name-recognition, and the Huskers could be a very attractive package, especially if they win all those appealing non-conference games and Taylor makes a fast Heisman start. The key

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will be if other Big Eight foes can offer similar celebrity appeal and, at the very least, outside shots at giving NU a close game. OSU, with Mike Gundy, Hart Lee Dykes and David Bailey, might.

Tom Osborne and Barry Switzer were featured on the cover of the Midwest edition of *The Sporting News* this summer, and it's said the two have never posed together before. TSN was a hot topic in Nebraska for that and other reasons. First, the Huskers were ranked No. 4 in that mag's Top 20, highlighted by a prediction that NU will beat Oklahoma, a No. 6 pick.

Secondly and unfortunately, TSN slighted LeRoy Etienne big-time. NU's senior was rated as the third-best inside linebacker in America but was not mentioned in a separate story as a serious candidate for the Dick Butkus award. In the All-American preview article, Etienne was ranked higher than four players who were

picked elsewhere in the magazine as having a good chance of winning the Butkus. And two of those four linebackers are juniors.

Bob Devaney and Oklahoma Athletic Director Donnie Duncan got together for an unusual celebration this July as they were guest speakers for the third annual Big Red Spring Fling, which is a friendly gathering of Husker and Sooner fans who share a little golf and goodwill.

The event was held in Grove, Okla., and more than 150 fans of both schools attended, highlighted by Nebraska's 1936 All-American fullback Sam Francis. The Oklahoma Cornhusker Club and the Tulsa Area Oklahoma Alumni Association co-hosted the golf tournament and banquet, which profits the general scholarship funds of both schools.

Duncan shot straight with the mixed crowd concerning Oklahoma's

recent allegations from the NCAA, and he said they have no quarrel with some matters being mishandled in the Sooner camp several years ago, but that several NCAA allegations would be hotly contested. There's a chin-up attitude in Norman. Concerning the OU-NU rivalry, Duncan was uniformly warm and friendly, although he smilingly blistered his neighbor Oklahoma State.

While Duncan roasted the Cowboys, Devaney had both Husker and Sooner fans in nothing short of convulsions with his self-effacing banquet humor.

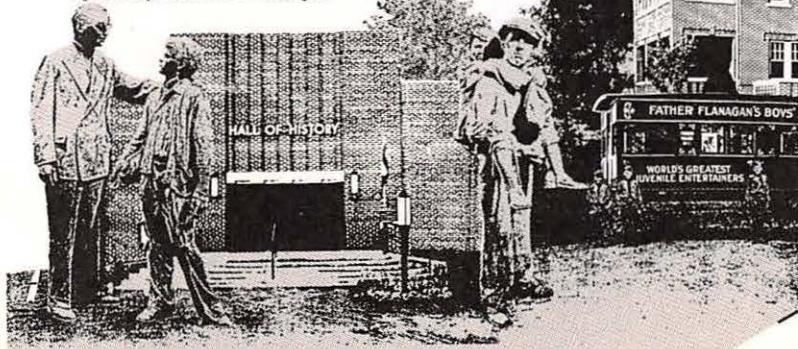
Attention, subscribers! If long-distance subscribers would like to receive *Huskers Illustrated* via first-class postage during the fall, simply send \$10 for an upgrade. This covers the weekly publishing cycle. You can telephone for a credit card order or pay by check. See the contents page for those numbers. ■

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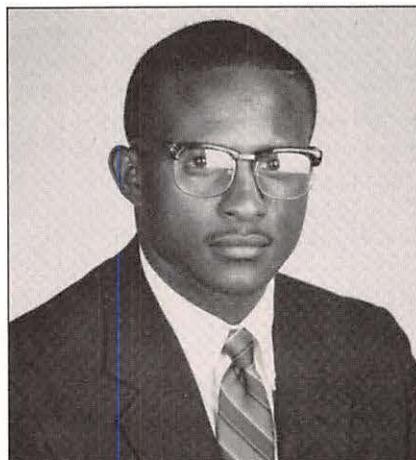
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Texas A&M Aggies

There are some spooky similarities between Texas A&M and the Oklahoma squad that numbed Nebraska last season. Mostly, it relates to defense. The Aggies feature four outstanding linebackers in their 3-4 scheme, and it's possible two could be All-Americans. In OU's 5-2 setup, the Sooners also had four studs in the standup positions, only they called them linebackers and ends, two of whom made All-American. In any lingo, OU's outside people gave Nebraska fits last year, and A&M boasts of OLBs John Roper, a senior, and Aaron Wallace. Roper is the All-American; some people think Wallace, a junior, is better.

Offensively, the Ags are loaded with quick and talented running backs, just like Oklahoma last year.

Overall, Coach Jackie Sherrill has recruited tons of *Parade* All-Americans over the years, again like the Sooners. But with all that talent, A&M has consistently been good (especially on defense) but not great.



Rod Harris, all-conference split end

Expect the same this year, and here's why . . .

First, no one in College Station is saying their offensive line is the best since the first amoeba crawled from the oceanic slime a billion years ago, which is what OU said of its front five last year. Second, there's no guaran-

tee A&M's starting noseguard will be more talented than that first amoeba that crawled from the oceanic slime a billion years ago, which means the Aggies will be suspect up the middle.

Finally, A&M is a tad green at one corner and at free safety. In contrast, OU was loaded in the secondary.

Key Matchups: Nebraska center Jake Young versus the Aggie noseguard. If Young overpowers the middle, NU might grind it out all day while A&M's talented outside linebackers watch from the corners.

Strengths: Linebackers and running backs! A deadly combination.

Weaknesses: The defensive line is still unsettled, and the offensive line is unproven. Nebraska's young defensive front faces only a modest test.

Statistically Speaking: A&M is on an eight-game winning streak. The two outside linebackers made 55 percent of the team's QB sacks last year, and the four returning LB starters accounted for fully one-third of A&M's total tackles in 1987. ■

The Report Card

NU	POS.	A&M
A	QB	B
B	RB	A
A-	OL	B
A-	E	B+
C+	DL	C
A	LB	A
B+	DB	B
A-	K	A

Nebraska vs. Texas A&M

When: 7 p.m. (Central), Saturday, Aug. 27, 1988.

Where: Meadowlands, N.J.

Media Coverage: Husker Radio Network and Raycom-TV (national syndication).

Texas A&M Facts: Coach — Jackie Sherrill (Alabama, 1966), enters his seventh season at A&M with a 45-23-1 record, 29-7-0 over the past three years. School Colors — Maroon and White. Nickname — Aggies. Conference — Southwest. Enrollment — 36,000, Basic Offense — Multiple. Basic Defense — 3-4.

The Series: Nebraska leads, 4-1, with all games having been played in Lincoln. The schools last played in 1972 when Bob Devaney's final Husker team beat

Emory Bellard's first Aggie team, 37-7, before A&M steadily climbed back to power. NU's 1971 national championship team crushed A&M, 34-7, as Bill Kosch scored on a 95-yard interception return, and fullback Bill Olds ran 67 yards for another TD. The 1969 contest was on regional TV, and Nebraska won, 14-0, helped by tight end Jim McFarland's school-record seven catches. The only Aggie win came in 1950 when Paul Bryant's 7-2-1 squad beat NU, 27-0. The series started in 1930 with a 13-0 Husker win. Tom Osborne has never faced a Jackie Sherrill-coached team. Osborne has a 5-1 record against the Southwest Conference.

COACH'S EVALUATION

Tom Osborne

Huskers Ready for A&M

"Texas A&M definitely will have great athletes. I believe they've recruited better than any school in the Southwest Conference over the last five or six years. They have the bulk of their great players back from a team that defeated Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl. I think they return six or seven starters on defense and six or seven starters on offense. They figure to be a very fine team, maybe as good as we'll play this season.

"Jackie Sherrill probably wouldn't have involved his team in the Kickoff Classic if he hadn't felt quite confident in his players' abilities.

"They're in an optimum recruiting situation in that A&M is located in a densely populated area with a lot of athletes, a lot of speed. They have excellent facilities and good weather. It's a very good situation, very conducive to great football teams, and they haven't seemed to be affected in recruiting by all the turmoil in the Southwest Conference. As a result of that, more good high school players have left Texas than usual.

"Certainly, playing an early game like the Kickoff Classic concerns you. It makes for a longer year. But I don't know what you can do about it. Some people have said that was a factor in our losing to Miami in the Orange Bowl in 1983, after beginning the season in the first Kickoff Classic against Penn State. But I didn't think so.

"We started slowly against Miami, got behind 17-0 in the first quarter. Then we came back and played pretty well. We lost Mike Rozier early in the game. He was hurt in the first quarter and didn't come back.

"And then, subsequently, we found out there was some agent activity down in Miami that was distracting to some of our key players.

"I didn't find out about that until much later. But I didn't think the length of the season really hurt us in that game. It does make for a long year though.

"I'd say Todd Millikan appears to be pretty close to 100 percent. And I think Mark Blazek made remarkable

strides in the middle of the summer. He went about five months with no noticeable improvement, and we really began to question whether he'd be able to play this season at all.

"Steve Taylor has made progress with the thigh injury that limited him in the spring and should be okay.

"Jake Young had shoulder surgery

after spring practice but should be okay, too. At the end of spring practice, I had no idea about Millikan and Blazek, but we're generally optimistic about all of them.

"Steve Taylor's lost some weight. I think he weighed about 208 in the winter conditioning program. He's not as big as he was then. The last time they ran agility tests, Steve set a record, so he can still move like heck. He carries extra weight well." ■

CORNHUSKER 2-DEEP

OFFENSE

SE	Morgan Gregory	6-0	185	jr.
	Chip Bahe	5-10	175	so.
LT	Bob Sledge	6-2	270	sr.
	Tom Punt	6-8	270	so.
LG	Andy Keeler	6-3	265	sr.
	Mark Antonietti	6-2	265	sr.
C	Jake Young	6-5	260	jr.
	Jeff Anderson	6-4	270	jr.
RG	John Nelson	6-1	260	jr.
	Bill Bobbora	6-3	260	jr.
RT	Doug Glaser	6-7	295	jr.
	Terry Eyman	6-6	265	so.
TE	Todd Millikan	6-3	245	sr.
	Monte Kratzenstein	6-4	225	jr.
QB	Steve Taylor	6-0	205	sr.
	Gerry Gdowski	6-1	195	jr.
FB	Sam Schmidt	6-1	230	jr.
	Bryan Carpenter	5-10	200	jr.
IB	Ken Clark	5-9	200	jr.
	Terry Rodgers	5-7	170	so.
WB	Richard Bell	6-0	195	jr.
	Jamie Worden	5-10	175	sr.
PK	Chris Drennan	5-9	180	jr.
	Gregg Barrios	5-8	180	so.

DEFENSE

OLB	Broderick Thomas	6-3	235	sr.
	Jeff Mills	6-3	220	jr.
LT	Willie Griffin	6-3	275	sr.
	Joe Sims	6-4	265	so.
MG	Mike Murray	5-10	240	jr.
	Brian Edgren	6-1	260	so.
RT	Paul Brungardt	6-7	255	so.
	Kent Wells	6-5	285	jr.
OLB	Jon Marco	6-1	220	sr.
	Mike Croel	6-3	215	so.
SLB	Randall Jobman	6-3	230	jr.
	LeRoy Etienne	6-1	230	jr.
WLB	Pat Tyrance	6-2	230	so.
	Chris Caliendo	6-3	240	jr.
LCB	Lorenzo Hicks	6-0	195	sr.
	John Custard	5-9	165	sr.
RCB	Tahaun Lewis	5-11	170	so.
	Charles Fryar	5-10	175	sr.
SS	Reggie Cooper	6-3	200	so.
	Mark Blazek	6-2	200	sr.
S	Tim Jackson	6-0	190	sr.
	Mark Blazek	6-2	200	sr.
P	John Kroeker	5-11	175	sr.
	Scott Beckler	6-0	185	so.

AGGIE 2-DEEP

OFFENSE

TE	Brian Ross	6-5	235	jr.
	Wally Hartley	6-5	232	jr.
LT	L.B. Moon	6-6	265	sr.
	Darren Grudy	6-5	325	jr.
LG	Richmond Webb	6-7	260	jr.
	Chris Work	6-4	240	so.
C	Mike Arthur	6-4	251	so.
	Mike Pappas	6-2	250	so.
RG	Jerry Fontenot	6-4	260	sr.
	Bill Cavanaugh	6-4	260	jr.
RT	Matt McCall	6-8	300	so.
	Scott Maham	6-5	270	sr.
QB	Bucky Richardson	6-1	195	so.
	Lance Pavlas	6-2	195	so.
TB	Darren Lewis	5-11	205	so.
	Larry Horton	6-0	190	so.
FB	Matt Gurley	6-0	210	sr.
	Randy Simmons	6-2	215	fr.
SE	Rod Harris	5-11	183	sr.
	Percy Waddle	6-2	175	jr.
F	Gary Oliver	6-2	170	so.
	Felton Ransby	6-2	185	jr.
PK	Scott Slater	6-0	180	sr.
	Layne Talbot	5-10	185	so.

DEFENSE

LC	Alex Morris	6-2	190	sr.
	Derrick Richey	5-11	175	sr.
RC	Mickey Washington	5-11	180	jr.
	Dion Snow	6-1	185	jr.
SS	Gary Jones	6-2	210	jr.
	Brent Smith	6-2	203	sr.
FS	William Thomas	6-3	190	so.
	John Cooper	6-3	207	jr.
OLB	John Roper	6-2	220	sr.
	Tim Landrum	6-1	220	sr.
OLB	Aaron Wallace	6-4	225	jr.
	Jeroy Robinson	6-2	220	jr.
LE	Leon Cole	6-4	270	sr.
	O'Neill Gilbert	6-3	250	sr.
MG	Jeff Shanks	6-4	255	jr.
	John Miller	6-2	266	jr.
RE	Terry Price	6-4	265	jr.
	Albert Jones	6-4	272	so.
LB	Dana Batiste	6-0	220	sr.
	Joe Johnson	6-2	210	sr.
LB	Adam Bob	6-3	230	sr.
	Basil Jackson	6-1	219	sr.
P	Sean Wilson	6-0	205	so.

Rod Henkel

Spring practice not only prepared the Nebraska players for the fall season, it also enabled the Cornhuskers' film crew to experiment with new equipment.

Beginning this fall, Nebraska football players will be captured on video tape rather than film.

Nebraska coaches, after careful and lengthy investigation, chose to purchase a Super VHS system to film and evaluate players.

"It's not something they just jumped into," said Floyd Sorley, NU film crew member.

During early June, representatives from five of the other seven Big Eight schools visited Lincoln and observed the Cornhuskers' system, according to NU defensive coordinator Charlie McBride.

Cost savings, speed and easy copying are three primary reasons McBride and Sorley cited in purchasing Super VHS.



Charlie McBride

"We'll save ourselves a whole lot of money," said McBride, who conducted a portion of the investigative work himself.

The quick processing ability of the new system was apparent at the spring game, according to McBride.

As the coaches exited the field, film of the first half was available. When they had graded the first two quarters, the second half was ready for examination.

With the old system, Sorley said, films would not be completely processed until 11 p.m. sometimes after games.

Tapes can be used multiple times and copied quickly.

Most high school programs use video cameras to film competition and NU coaches can make Super VHS copies from regular VHS tapes.

"It's going to help us so much with the time element and evaluating high school prospects," McBride said . . .

Eight members of the 1987 Cornhuskers were recently signed as free agents by teams in the National Football League.

Nebraska assistant coaches learned of the signings from the players. According to McBride, 1987 Huskers

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who signed as free agents include:

McCathorn Clayton, Miami; John McCormick, Miami; Von Sheppard, Minnesota; Lee Jones, Phoenix; Rod Smith, Los Angeles Raiders; Keven Lightner, Tampa Bay; Tom Banderas, Washington; Jon Kelley, Denver.

McBride said three other former Huskers signed free agent contracts. Henry Waechter, an NU letterman in 1980-81, signed with Denver, Chris Spachman, who lettered at Nebraska in 1984-86, signed with Phoenix, and Bryan Siebler, an NU letterman in 1984-86, signed with Chicago.

It is not very common for a free agent to make a team, McBride said, but "every once in a while."

NFL teams sign free agents, according to McBride, because "the pros need players in camp. It also gives the kid a chance to make the team . . ."

Two 1987 scholarship recruits should overcome Proposition 48 re-

quirements for their second year on the NU campus.

According to Nebraska's Director of Academic Programs Dr. Roger Grooters, Tim Herman "is there" and William Thomas "should be there."

During their freshman years, athletes must carry a 2.0 grade point average (on a 4.0 scale) to qualify under Proposition 48, Dr. Grooters said.

Herman, a 6-foot-6, 240-pound linebacker from Lincoln was a two-time all-class, all-state selection at Southeast High School. Thomas, 6-1, 180-pound brother of linebacker Broderick Thomas, plays in the defensive secondary.

Dr. Grooters said the 1988 recruit class "looks like a pretty good group," both academically and athletically.

High school players, to comply with Proposition 48, must take 11 core courses and own a 2.0 GPA in those courses and score a minimum of 15 on their ACT test or a 1700 on SAT

tests, Dr. Grooters said.

In NU's 1988 recruit class, "One or two are questionable," he said. "We're still waiting on test scores . . ."

Bill Kenney has been replaced as a graduate assistant for the Cornhuskers by Jeff Jamrog.

Kenney, who worked with the offensive backs, served one year as the freshmen's offensive coordinator and coached the outside linebackers one year, completed his two-year commitment at NU.

The Boston-area native currently holds a graduate-assistant post at Penn State, where he will help coach the outside linebackers.

"I had a great experience out there," said Kenney, who hopes to coach at the Division I level someday. "You get great football insights in terms of knowledge. You also get a lot of valuable learning experience working with two head coaches like Tom Osborne and Joe Paterno." ■

James E. Sherwood

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This Guy's No Couch Potato

SAM SCHMIDT THRIVES ON HARD WORK, AND THE PAYOFF GIVES NEBRASKA A STOUT ONE-TWO PUNCH AT FULLBACK.



Sam Schmidt (25) has an excellent track record in two spring practices, but injuries limited his fall action last year.

With a frustration-filled season behind him, Nebraska fullback Sam Schmidt enters fall practice facing the challenge of maintaining his No. 1 position on the depth chart.

The Cornhusker junior possesses the skills, work habits and strong faith to meet the challenge. He hopes a new, improved attitude will also help.

Schmidt ascended to the second-string fullback position during the spring following his 1986 redshirt season. "I was ready for fall," he says.

But nagging injuries struck in preseason. First, he suffered a week-long back spasm.

Shortly after he recovered from that, a teammate fell on his ankle and knee from behind. A hyperextended knee and twisted ankle resulted and Schmidt missed a few days of practice. All of this happened prior to the Cornhuskers' initial 1987 game against Utah State.

"It really slowed me down a lot," Schmidt says. "Not really my speed, but my performance and my learning."

Schmidt admits he probably attempted to return to action too quickly. The coaches eventually moved him down on the depth chart.

After earning all-state honors in high school, receiving an NU scholarship and starting on the 1985 freshman squad, a demotion was, in Schmidt's words, tough to handle.

"It seems everything you've worked for, you're going the opposite way," Schmidt says. "It's hard to keep a good attitude. I know I didn't."

Players, including Schmidt, place much emphasis on winning first-string status, he says, although coaches downplay depth-chart rankings.

Schmidt claims he could be more

enthusiastic while occupying the second-string fullback position behind Micah Heibel.

However, "I had a bad attitude after I got put down, just an attitude of 'this sucks.'

"I blew up in practice a couple of times. You know the right attitude to take is 'I'm going to work hard to get my position back.' That's the attitude I took eventually, but the first couple of weeks were tough."

Bryan Carpenter, a transfer from Coffeyville (Kan.) Junior College, moved up to second-string fullback with Schmidt's demotion. Carpenter's solid play, Schmidt says, contributed to his remaining in the third slot throughout the remainder of the season.

Schmidt still played in every quarter of every game as he occupied spots on the kickoff return and extra point teams. He managed 73 rushing yards on 12 carries.

"After I got a hard-working attitude back, I started to learn again," Schmidt says. "By the end of the season, I thought I was playing really well. After I got going again, it was fun again."

NU running backs coach Frank Solich said Schmidt's attitude adjustment became apparent as the 1987 season and the 1988 spring drills progressed.

"It's been noticeable," Solich says. "Sam's a very intense person. If he was not doing things perfectly, he used to get a little frustrated. I think he's learned to relax on the football field."

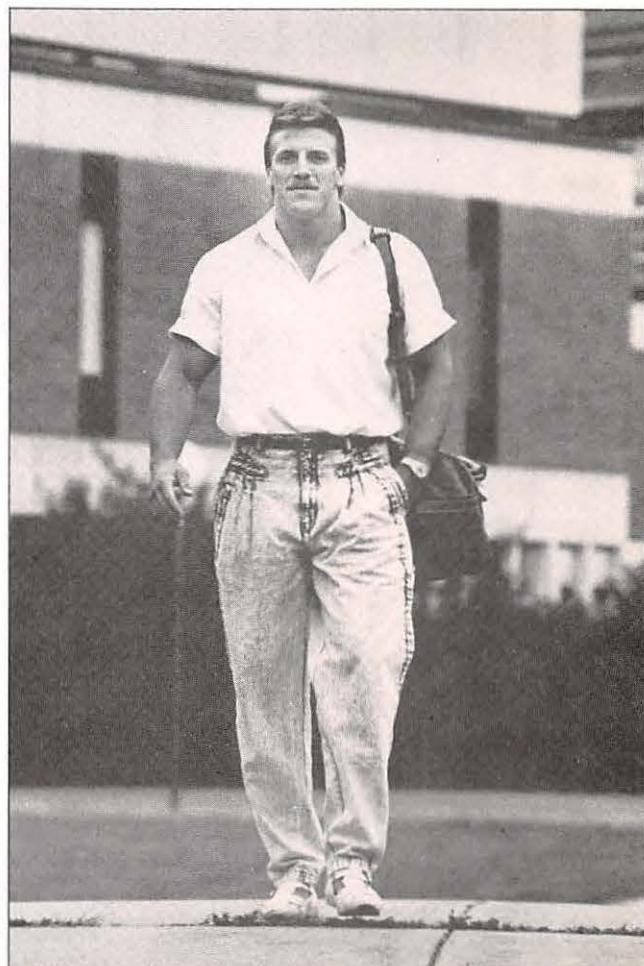
Schmidt does not claim all the credit for overcoming his setbacks as a Cornhusker.

He says he relied on a strong faith in God, as well as support from family and friends, to get back on track.

"A lot of guys quit after they get moved down. It's easy to do," he says. "I don't think it was me as much as it was God who helped me through the situation. If it was just me, I don't think I could have changed my attitude when I got moved down."

With Heibel completing his eligibility in 1987, Carpenter moved to first-string fullback for spring drills

Schmidt has mellowed since last fall when some hard luck brought out a mean streak.



and Schmidt was No. 2.

The Wood River graduate had eyes on moving up during the spring, but Schmidt was more intent on playing well.

"I wanted to do the best I could. If I wasn't able to move up, that was okay as long as I performed," he says. "The importance of the depth chart lies in my own performance."

The two players switched positions as they exited spring practice, but Schmidt knows Carpenter will not settle for reserve status this fall.

"The competition, that will only make me a better player," Schmidt says. "It should be a competition between myself. Can I improve myself to where I'm a better player?"

Although the two junior fullbacks differ in physical stature, Solich ranks them a near tossup for depth chart purposes.

Carpenter stands 5-foot-9 and

weighs 200 pounds while Schmidt is 6-0 and will attempt to play at 230 pounds this fall.

"They are very close. They're going to both be contributing very highly to the ball club next year," Solich says. "Both have fine athletic ability."

While Carpenter went the junior college route, Schmidt progressed through the ranks at Nebraska.

He rushed for 66 yards and two touchdowns on 18 carries with the freshman squad. During his redshirt season, Schmidt ran with the regular offensive unit and not the scout team, like most redshirts.

"That helped me a lot as far as playing and as far as developing my skills at fullback in general," Schmidt says.

Carpenter owns an edge in foot speed and Solich describes the Olathe (Kansas) native as a "very tough kid," capable of handling the blocking duties.



Schmidt, Solich says, "certainly has the size to do the heavy duty type stuff required of the fullback. Yet, he does have good speed and is capable of breaking long runs."

The position of Nebraska fullback lends itself to punishment and quality backups are necessary. Solich expresses confidence in Schmidt and Carpenter.

"I feel good about the position. I think those two will be quality ball-players for us," he says. "They are a couple of the hardest working kids that we have on the team. In that

regard, they are very similar."

Schmidt has never shied away from hard work, even in his youth.

He began working at age 10, filling small bags of potatoes at the Parker Potato Company.

For eight summers, he labored at the potato plant, the last four years stacking 50- and 100-pound bags.

"I always thought of the school year as a break," Schmidt says. "I couldn't wait for it to come."

He claims he earned more than \$1,000 as a 10-year-old and in later summers, worked as many as 72 hours

a week.

Schmidt's father, Steve, worked at the plant, enabling Sam to find employment there also. Clare Schmidt, Sam's mother, would not let her son lift weights until he was 15, he says, so the work at the potato plant filled that void.

"It was heavy work," Schmidt says.

Following high school graduation, Schmidt worked construction each summer until the most recent one. He still worked in the summer of 1988, but at what he called an "easier" job.

Many friends laugh when Schmidt, a 21-year-old, claims to have worked for 11 years.

"I'm not afraid of hard work," he says. "I just always have done it. I'm sure my father had a lot to do with that. He's always been a hard worker at whatever he's done."

Schmidt met weight lifters at the potato plant. They and Schmidt's high school football coach, Howard Jackson, Schmidt says, influenced his performance in the weight room.

In 1987 and again in 1988, Schmidt ranked as a finalist for Lifter of the Year honors at Nebraska.

He credits his days at the potato plant for his hard-working habits. He also realizes extra effort is required of Nebraska football players.

"Hard work is definitely a part of the program," Schmidt says, "You can't come in and expect somebody to do the work for you."

Schmidt began working toward his goal of becoming a Cornhusker early in life. After participating in all sports throughout his junior high days, he concentrated his efforts on football in high school.

With the persuasion of Coach Jackson, Schmidt went out for track to enhance his football skills. He ran the longer sprints and was a standout discus thrower.

"Lifting weights was my third sport," Schmidt says.

The goal Schmidt established while growing up came true when Tom Osborne called the Wood River star four games into his senior season and offered a scholarship.

Other college coaches may have

called Schmidt after that, but Jackson intercepted the inquiries. "After (Nebraska offered the scholarship) I didn't care who called," Schmidt says.

"Everyone that was around me and influenced me looked at Nebraska as being the best in the nation. The elite went to Nebraska.

"Nebraska would be the best place I could earn a scholarship to."

Within his tight high school schedule of athletic practices and weight lifting, Schmidt managed some time for another hobby — singing.

Schmidt participated in swing choir, chorus and school musicals. He played the lead in "Guys and Dolls."

"I enjoyed singing," Schmidt says. "I don't know if people around me enjoyed me singing."

Schmidt relates singing before a hometown audience to playing football in front of a packed Memorial Stadium.

"I know a couple hundred people probably doesn't compare to 76,000, but you definitely get as nervous," he says. "When you're that young, that's really big, being in front of 200 people trying to act and you know acting isn't your main talent.

"I'm definitely nervous before every game just like I was in plays. Maybe I've progressed. I can handle a few more people."

Although Schmidt is no longer active in singing groups, such versatility — lifting, playing football and singing — fits the mold of a Nebraska fullback.

Schmidt lists blocking, carrying the ball and reading a play on the run as necessary skills.

"We do a little of everything. We even caught a pass here last spring, says Schmidt, who gives a simple description for Cornhusker fullbacks.

"It's somebody who hits a lot. People always think linebackers hit the most. There's no way. Fullbacks hit more than linebackers."

And when Nebraska fullbacks hit, they better make sure the defender thinks twice about accepting a blow again. That's what Solich expects, according to Schmidt.

"He definitely wants us aggressive," Schmidt says. "Aggressive is definite-

ly a big part of the game at any position. Technique is too, but there is a happy medium."

An aggressor on the field, Schmidt becomes an easy-going person away from the game. He enjoys recreational sports. Schmidt learned to water ski in early June.

If extra time permits, Schmidt is cleaning his room or relaxing.

He most often fits weight lifting into his daily routine, though. Schmidt enjoys that.

"I know it's not absolutely the only thing that got me here," he says, "but it helped a lot."

He also gains confidence and support from friends in the Wood River and Grand Island area. When he returns to the home territory, Schmidt must answer questions pertaining to football and the Cornhuskers.

Schmidt considers his small-town heritage an advantage.

Players who come from larger

towns, like Kansas City, don't have a couple thousand people wondering how you're doing at Nebraska," Schmidt says. "Being from the Wood River and Grand Island area, people are more interested in you."

A high school National Honor Society member, Schmidt carries an above average grade-point average in Nebraska's business administration program.

Following graduation, Schmidt would consider a career in professional football if the opportunity arises. "Everybody thinks about it," he says. "Every football player would think that was quite an honor."

But eventually, Schmidt hopes to go into business, possibly finance. He may even find time to coach, as a hobby.

No matter what, two things are for certain in Schmidt's future. He will work hard and avoid working at potato factories. ■

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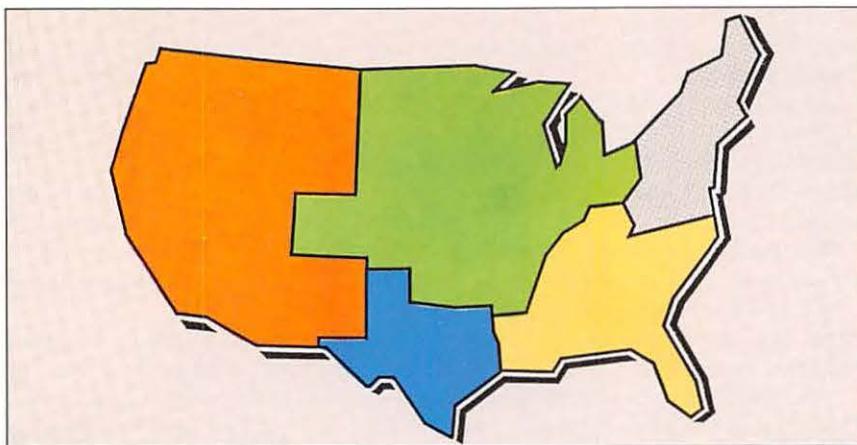
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Isn't college football great? Not only do you have great athletes, great rivalries, unmatched tradition and the constant debate of who is No. 1, but you get two different categories of quarterbacks.

That's right. Two different categories for quarterbacks! This isn't pro ball where the classic quarterback is 6-foot-2 or taller with the ability to throw the ball 70 yards with a great touch. Yes, in the college game that type of signal caller does fit into category one, that of the throwing QB.

But in the college game we are lucky that there is room for the guy who fits into category two, that of the option quarterback. Those slick little versatile guys who operate the option offense so well you think you are watching three offenses at once.

In most respects the option QB has to have the basic intangibles of the quarterbacks in category one. They have to be leaders and be respected by the entire team (this despite the fact that many of the option types are the smallest players on the field), they must possess great mechanics, know their team's personnel, know the opponent's personnel, be able to call plays at the line of scrimmage, be resourceful and be able to pass the ball if not spectacularly, at least accurately. So what is the difference between the two?

"Speed," says OU recruiting coordinator Scott Hill. "The first thing is speed. Your great option quarterbacks have great speed. Let's face it — our quarterbacks are runners first and throwers second, so when we analyze

a quarterback on paper the first thing we look for is speed.

"Next is overall running ability, then his size. The average size of a good option quarterback is 5-10, 175 pounds and 4.4 to 4.6 speed. When I hear about a so-called great option quarterback who's 6-2, 200 pounds with 4.4 speed, I don't believe it until I see it."

WEST

With that in mind, seeing will be believing for Hill and others across the country when they lay eyes on Curtis Conway of Hawthorn, Calif., the nation's top option quarterback prospect.

Conway's vitals are 6-2½, 185 pounds and 4.4 speed in the 40. Heck, Conway tops that off with a 10.4 clocking in the 100 meters. If that doesn't have you drooling at this point, will the fact that Conway was responsible for 39 of his team's 42 touchdowns a year ago get you going? Wait! That's not all. Conway can throw! That's right, he could fit into category one without much trouble. As a junior Conway threw for 1,800 yards while rushing for 936. UNBELIEVABLE! Is this guy for real?

"He's the greatest athletic talent I have ever had the pleasure of working with in over 20 years of coaching," says Hawthorn Head Coach Loy Casillas. "A great athlete who just happens to be the best quarterback who's ever played for me. Curtis is so gifted that I don't have any doubts

that he can play for any college in the country in any type of offense.

"I personally want Curtis to go to a program that has a versatile offense, one that will not lock him into one pattern," Casillas continued. "He's not weak in any one area so he can drop back as well as roll out, but I feel he could be the best option quarterback who ever lived. Not only is he talented at reading and running the option, but he would put so much pressure on defenses out of that formation because he is a big-time passer as well. I won't try to influence him. If he wants to concentrate on option football that's fine with me. Shoot, at a program like Oklahoma's, he just might lead the nation in rushing and passing."

Or at a program like Nebraska's. The Huskers could provide that versatile offense that Coach Casillas is talking about. Remember, Steve Taylor prides himself more on his passing ability than his running. Conway says he will visit the Huskers along with UCLA, USC and Arizona State. As for the fifth visit, Conway is considering the Sooners along with Washington and Michigan.

The Conway scuttlebutt out west is that he will team with Encino Crisp, Calif. running back Russell White as a tandem and head to USC. The word is that the two feel that they would make quite a team in someone's offensive backfield. There are some doubts about the Land of Troy being that university. White's standpoint is logical since the Trojans do not have an all-world tailback on the roster, but they do have the next great all-world QB in lefty Todd Marinovich. The tandem may never materialize since White is rumored to be leaning toward the Trojans.

Other notable option operators out west include Greg Johnson (5-11, 170, 4.6) of Alameda Encina, Calif., and Tim Norman (6-1, 160, 4.6) of Soquel, Calif. Johnson is the better pure runner of the two, already operating out of the wishbone, while Norman works out of the I-formation where he is an extremely good runner with quick feet and a nice touch throwing the ball.

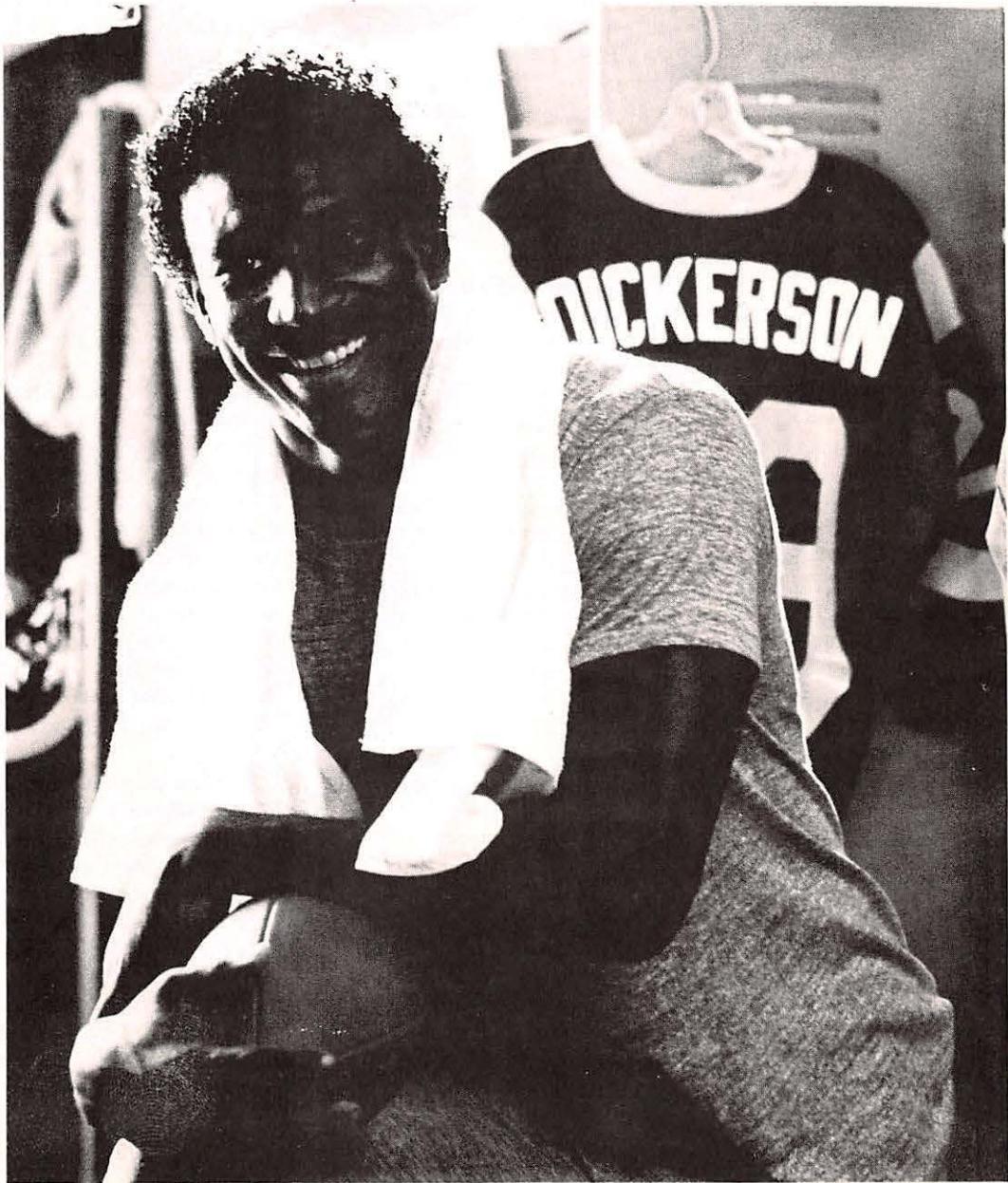
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SOUTHWEST

Year in and year out, Texas puts out more option quarterbacks than any other state. The cream of the crop in '88 will be Houston Langham Creek's Bert Emanuel. Another great physical specimen at 6-1, 175 with a blistering 4.4 in the 40. Emanuel is such a gifted runner that he is one of the top three kick returners in Texas. Averaging 5.7 yards per carry as a junior, Emanuel rushed for 663 out of a Wing-T offense while hitting on 47 of 101 passes for five TDs and seven interceptions.

He's an option quarterback who possesses a strong arm but lacks touch in his passing game. An added plus in Emanuel's case is that he is one of the top scholar-athletes in Texas carrying a 3.8 GPA. At this point Emanuel is talking UCLA, Michigan, Syracuse, Miami, LSU and Notre Dame, so he is not just thinking about the option game at this point.

Another athletically gifted option quarterback in Texas is Liberty's Donald Douglas. At 6-4, 190 pounds, Douglas runs a quick 4.6. Operating out of the veer Douglas rushed for 933 yards and 10 TDs while hitting on 74 of 212 passes for 1,298 yards and 12 TDs. Granted, it would be unusual to see an option quarterback who stands 6-4, but Douglas is unique in that he is extremely quick with a vertical leap of 36 inches. Donald could also double up as a punter, as he averaged 34.4 yards per kick a year ago.

Marvin Callies (5-11, 175, 4.5) of Boling, Tex., is another QB that option schools will fight over. Callies rushed for 1,015 yards at 6.1 yards per carry, while throwing for 1,046 yards, hitting 45 of 98 passes for 10 TDs. In Dallas, Marcus Frazier (5-10, 164, 4.55) of Hillcrest High School is another highly touted option QB. Frazier rushed for 613 yards while throwing for 701 and five TDs. Those at W.T. White High are raving about the exploits of Calvin Murray (5-11, 185, 4.45), the younger brother of former Texas A&M great Kevin Murray. Murray is a raw talent who rushed

for 525 yards while hitting 60 of 125 passes for 920 yards and six TDs.

Louisiana turns out a great option QB every year and this year's national attraction is Artha Shine of Minden. This 4.45 speedster is stout at 6-0 and 180 pounds. An explosive QB who is compared favorably with Michael Carr, the top option QB in Louisiana a year ago who signed with Pitt. Shine is a great athlete who can score from anywhere on the field and who excels at throwing on the run. Greg Ratliff (5-11, 170, 4.6) of Assumption, La., is ranked behind Shine, but is still good enough to draw national attention.

Dester Siegler (5-9, 162, 4.55) wants to remain a QB even though every school in the country that doesn't work with the option wants to sign Siegler as a defensive back. There are several option schools across the country that will give Siegler the opportunity to remain behind center.

Other notables down south with outstanding option credentials include Bru Bender (5-10, 175, 4.55) of Barnwell, S.C. Bender is the top rated option QB in S.C. who has been reading the triple option for the past two years. Greg Plump (6-1, 190, 4.5) of Hattiesburg, Miss., is a great athlete who reminds several college recruiters of OU's Eric Mitchel in high school. Darryle Mosley (5-10, 185, 4.5) of Blocton West Morgan, Ala., combined for 1,200 yards in total offense, but was even better at defensive corner where he managed 111 tackles and five interceptions. Walter Odom (5-11, 175, 4.5) of Mobile Baker, Ala., is unique in that he's a southpaw operating the bone. Odom is considered the best pure option QB in Alabama.

In Georgia, Victor Griffin (6-3, 182, 4.55) of Macon Central is the talk of the state as far as option QBs go. Griffin has started since his sophomore year at a number of positions before settling into the QB slot midway through his junior year. Lamont Byrd (6-1, 190, 4.5) of Carrollton, Ga., combined for 1,413 yards and 12 TDs a year ago.

In Tennessee, two option QBs draw attention. One is Ron Davis (5-10, 185, 4.5) of Memphis Melrose, who is considered the best pure option QB in the state, passing for nearly 700 yards. Eric Moon (5-10, 163, 4.55) of Greenville is a great athlete who is just now learning the QB position.

In North Carolina, Lamont Johnson (5-11, 175, 4.5) of Kannapolis Brown is regarded as the best option operator in the state.

MIDLANDS

The top option QB in the Big Eight is Lorenzo Brinkley (6-0, 185, 4.5) of Hazelwood Central, Mo. Brinkley is quick with a powerful running style and break-away speed to go coast to coast. That Missouri is desperately looking for an option QB will make Brinkley a top priority.

In Iowa they are talking about DeCorah's Jason Olejniczak (6-0, 190, 4.5). Olejniczak is a great all-around performer whose greatest intangible is that he wins. With Olejniczak at the helm, DeCorah is 20-1 the past two years. Olejniczak will have to choose between football and baseball, and don't be surprised if Jason sees as many offers to play in the defensive backfield as he does at QB.

SOUTHEAST

Florida turns out a handful of option quarterbacks a year. The best of the bunch may be Derrick Jacobs (5-10, 170, 4.6) of Melbourne. "Jacobs just has a knack when it comes to running the option," says one college recruiter. At Lauderdale Lakes, Alphonso Tillman (5-9½, 190, 4.45) receives equal plaudits as the best pure option QB in the Sunshine State. Orion McCants (6-2, 185, 4.55) of Zephyr Hills, ran and passed for over 2,000 yards a year ago. Avon Park's

EAST

You don't find many option quarter-

backs back east; however, in Linden, N.J., recruiters are raving about the athletic talents of Antoine Allen. At 6-0, 170 pounds, Allen can cover 40 yards in 4.5 seconds. Allen is so gifted athletically that he could earn a scholarship in basketball as well. Allen's development as a quarterback will be closely watched throughout the season.

Option quarterbacks seem to come out of certain areas. Mostly out of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Florida and the South, with a smattering of option QBs scattered throughout the rest of the country.

The colleges have a great influence on what many of the high schools will do offensively, which is why you will see most of the option quarterbacks come out of Oklahoma, Texas and the southern states. Florida is different, in that the Big-3 of Miami, Florida State and Florida don't play option football. However, there are so many high school players in Florida that invariably you will find three to five great option quarterback prospects a year. The same goes for California. What is disappointing is that you may never hear of these young men as option QBs because they want to play for schools in their areas, so they eventually change positions.

Actually, changing positions is nothing new to an option quarterback. He instinctively knows that he is a good enough athlete that if he doesn't make it at quarterback, he will have a chance at some other spot.

"Our option quarterbacks may be the best overall athletes on our team," says OU recruiting coordinator Scott Hill. "You know they are going to be intelligent football players with great speed and quickness, which is a key to the overall success of our football team. We have had so many changes from quarterback to other positions to help us. You start with myself, Danny Ruster, Bruce Tatum, Sonny Brown, David Vickers, Jim Rockford, Eric Mitchel, Kenny McMichel, Bernard Hall and Chris Melson, to name a few. All of those guys have been keys to the success of our football program either as a starter or a top reserve at another position."

"You know these guys are winners coming out of high school," continues Hill. "We look at the high school winning percentage while these guys are at quarterback. If the team is winning with that player at quarterback, then you know he is a quality leader which you have to have in an option offense. The three players we signed this past year all quarterbacked successful teams in high school."

Athletic ability, leadership and great football sense are keys to being an outstanding option quarterback. However, the biggest challenge for the prospective college option quarterback is what he can do in the classroom. If he is not solid there he may never get a chance.

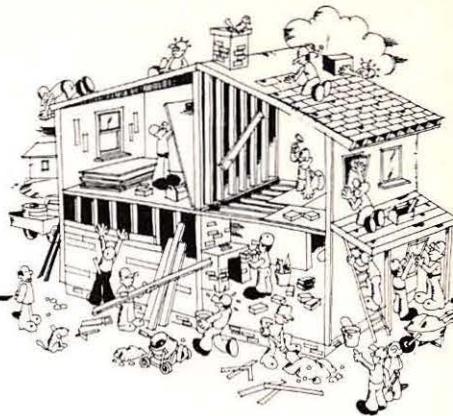
"You never take a chance on an option QB that is not going to make it academically," says Hill. "You just can't have an option quarterback sit out a year and expect him to ever play for you at quarterback. There is just too much for him to learn for him to skip a year."

Now you have what it takes to be a great option quarterback and what the college coaches are looking for.

In fact, you'll notice this season that college football boasts of an abundance of outstanding quarterbacks who are talented at both running the ball and passing it. If these collegians, from Jamelle Holieway to Steve Taylor, get all-star recognition this year that rivals the fame of today's drop-back QBs, you could see a revival of option offenses in the years ahead, especially if an option team takes the national title. In 1987, passing teams like Florida State and Miami were the rage because of high finishes in the polls while run-oriented OU and Nebraska took a media scolding. If the Huskers and Sooners, however, continue their winning ways into the 1990s, then much of the credit will go to guys who run their high school's option offense this fall.

There you have it; the top prospects to look for. But remember, often a great option QB prospect comes out of the woodwork during the season, so keep your eyes open.

Next time, we'll take a look at the passing quarterbacks. ■



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FOR ALL ITS FOOTBALL TRADITION, THE BIG EIGHT HAS PRODUCED ITS SHARE OF MAJOR LEAGUE TALENT.

If someone came up to you with the following statements, would you answer true or false?

1. The Big Eight has turned out more major league pitchers than hitters.

2. The most prolific major league hitter to play in the conference did not play for Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Nebraska or Missouri.

3. The most prolific major league pitcher to play in the Big Eight pitched for Oklahoma State.

While it may at first seem unlikely, all three of the above statements are true.

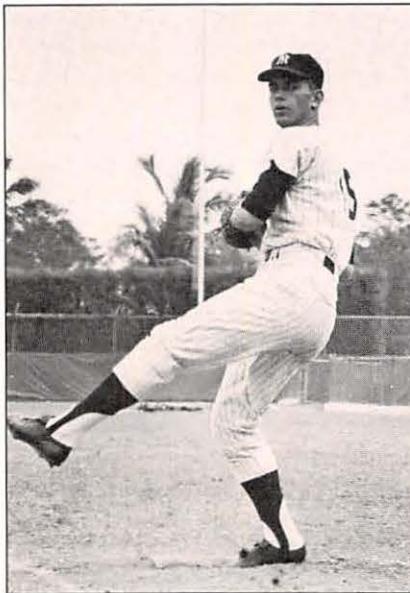
In a conference that has developed a national reputation as an offensive showcase, there have been a total of 71 players from the seven schools that currently compete in baseball who have made it to the majors. Of those, 38 found their way to the big leagues as pitchers, while 33 made their way up the ladder as position players.

The breakdown by school is more what a long-time fan of the league would expect, with such traditional powers as Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Missouri and Nebraska producing a majority of the major league talent.

Since 1947, Oklahoma has sent 20 players to the big leagues prior to the start of the 1988 season. Oklahoma State is next with 14, followed by Missouri (12), Nebraska (8), Kansas (7), Iowa State (4), and Kansas State (3). No official records were available for Colorado, but two former Buffaloes who played in the 1970s went on to the majors, one a pitcher, the other a catcher.

But quantity of numbers has not always equated with quality of production.

From a league that has seen Pete



Former Husker Stan Bahnsen is still the only Big Eight alum to be named Rookie of the Year in the majors.

Incaviglia assault the NCAA single-season and career home run records and Robin Ventura do the same to the national record for a hitting streak, the most prolific power hitter came not from the state of Oklahoma, but off of the campus of the University of Kansas.

Bob Allison was signed by the then Washington Senators after the 1954 season and he reached the major leagues in 1958. He became a regular in 1959, hitting .261 with 30 homers, 85 RBIs and he tied for the league lead with nine triples. For his

performance, Allison became the first Big Eight alum to be selected as the American League Rookie of the Year.

He went on to hit over 30 homers twice more (35 in 1963, 32 in 1964) and also drove in over 100 runs twice (105 in 1961, 102 in 1962). By contrast, only two other Big Eight grads, Bob Cerv, who hit 38 in 1958, and Pete Incaviglia who hit 30 in 1986 have ever reached the 30-homer plateau, and only Cerv, who drove in 105 runs in 1958, has ever topped 100 RBIs.

Allison finished his career in 1970 after 13 seasons. He left the game with 256 career homers and 796 RBIs in addition to finishing with 1,281 career base hits. All three of those career totals stand as the best major league output by any former Big Eight player.

Allison just nudged former Oklahoma standout Dale Mitchell for the most base hits in a career, but the late Sooner star finished his 11-year career with a .312 average, the best by any retired Big Eight player. Mitchell hit .300 or better in six of his 11 seasons, including a career-best of .336 in 1948. He finished 1948 with 204 hits and then came back to rack up 203 more in 1949, becoming the only conference player to top 200 hits in a big league season.

Unfortunately for Mitchell, all of his offensive prowess takes a back seat when most baseball historians recall his name. This career .312 hitter will best be remembered for a single strikeout, since that "K" was the 27th and final out of Don Larsen's perfect game in the 1956 World Series for the Yankees against Brooklyn.

On the Yankee bench that afternoon was another Big Eight alum who would soon make his own mark on

the conference's history in the majors.

Bob Cerv was a powerful outfielder out of Nebraska who found himself relegated to a pinch hitter role on the juggernaut New York clubs of the 1950s. He was effective at it, as his 12 career pinch hit homers attest. But after he was sold to the Kansas City Athletics in 1957, Cerv made his move.

In 1958, he slugged 38 homers and drove in 105 runs for the A's and earned himself a spot on the American League All-Star team. His 38 homers not only were the best ever by a conference player, his total still stands as the most by any professional player in Kansas City.

Cerv was a member, but not a star for the Yankees. But another Big Eight product was a much more essential element of their success in the '50s.

Allie Reynolds played under Henry P. Iba at Oklahoma A&M, and technically he wasn't a conference product since the school had yet to join the conference. But his record speaks for itself.

Reynolds began his major league career with the Cleveland Indians in 1942 and won a total of 51 games for the Tribe until he was traded to New York in 1947. He went on to win another 131 games for the Yankees through 1954, and he etched his name in the record book in 1951 by becoming the second pitcher to toss two no-hitters in a season.

His first was against his old club, the Indians, and their legendary ace Bob Feller. Reynolds blanked them 1-0 on July 12, then came back on Sept. 28 to stifle the Red Sox 8-0 for his second no-no and also give the Yankees at least a tie for the American League pennant.

He continued his onslaught the next year, becoming the first conference pitcher to win 20 games in a season, finishing the '52 season with a 20-8 record and a league-leading 2.06 ERA. He finished his career with a 182-106 career mark.

Stan Bahnsen was included in the first major league draft in 1965, being selected in the fourth round by the Yankees. He made his major

league debut in 1967 and became the second (and last to this point) conference product to earn Rookie of the Year honors when he finished the 1968 season with a 17-12 record and 2.05 ERA. He became the conference's second 20-game winner with a 21-16 season for the Chicago White Sox in 1972. He finished his career with a 146-149 record (second only to Reynolds) and his 2,528 career innings were the most for any alum.

The Big Eight's top strikeout pitcher made his first waves on the conference level as a first baseman. Winfred Siebert, mercifully known to the baseball world by his nickname of Sonny, earned all-conference honors in 1958 as a first baseman and he led the league in home runs. He never did lose his home run swing, hitting a total of 12 in his career, including six in 79 at bats for the Red Sox in 1971. But it was as a pitcher that he left his mark.

Siebert won 16 games in three different seasons, and finished with 140 victories in his career. His 1,510 strikeouts are the most by any conference pitching product. He also was one of the most well-traveled conference players, having been traded a total of five times in his career, including a 1969 deal that saw him move from the Indians to the Red Sox in exchange for several players including Ken "Hawk" Harrelson.

Relief pitching has become a much more appreciated part of the game over the last two decades. The save, while for many years a stat that was kept on an unofficial basis, did not become fully recognized as an official statistic until the 1969 season. But even before it became officially sanctioned, several Big Eight alums were racking up some impressive save totals.

Knuckleballer Eddie Fisher toiled for the most part before that anointing of the save, but that lack of official recognition doesn't diminish the former Oklahoma Sooner's career numbers.

Fisher's floater dazzled American League hitters to the tune of a career 85-70 record and 81 saves. His best season came in 1965 when he ap-

peared in a league-leading 82 games and finished with a 15-7 record, 2.40 ERA and 24 saves. His won-loss and appearance total are single-season bests for any conference reliever.

Jay Howell came out of the University of Colorado in the mid 1970s and despite an on-going battle with arm trouble throughout his career, the hard-throwing right hander has still racked up 71 "official" saves heading into the 1988 campaign with Los Angeles. Howell set the standard for conference products in a single season when he saved 29 games for Oakland in 1986.

Bob Locker came out of Iowa State in the late 1950s and became a solid reliever in a career that lasted until 1974. He first made his mark as a teammate of Fisher's with the White Sox and went on to play a key role in Oakland's first World Championship team in 1972. He led the league by appearing in 77 games for the White Sox in 1967 and finished his career with 576 career appearances, second only to Fisher's 690 among Big Eight alums. He also finished with 95 saves, but 44 of those came before 1969.

Speed has not been a trademark of Big Eight professionals and it took a pair of former football students to rack up some notable numbers in the stolen base department.

Phil Bradley was an All-Big Eight selection, both as a quarterback and as a centerfielder, but it was on the diamond that he chose to pursue a professional career. That choice proved to be a wise one, as Bradley has compiled a career .301 average, including a .310 mark in 1986. He's also used the swiftness that once helped him elude tacklers to rack up 107 stolen bases in his first five seasons, including a career-high 40 last season with Seattle. Both of those totals rank as the best on the base paths by a conference product.

Ironically, the No. 2 man out of the conference when it comes to steals was a catcher. John Stearns was an all-conference defensive back at Colorado and an All-American catcher for the Buffs. He was prized highly enough by baseball scouts in 1973 that he was chosen second overall by

the Philadelphia Phillies in the June draft, just behind Texas schoolboy legend David Clyde (first pick by the Texas Rangers), and just ahead of Robin Yount (third pick by the Milwaukee Brewers) and Dave Winfield (fourth pick by the San Diego Padres).

Stearns enjoyed an 11-year career,

most of it with the New York Mets. His best season at the plate was in 1977 when he hit .264 with 15 homers and 73 RBIs. It was also a productive year on the base paths as he set a National League record for catchers by swiping 25 bags.

While most of the top efforts by Big

Eight players were set many years ago, the new group of talent that has emerged in the last several years could soon re-write that chapter of conference history. Texas Ranger teammates Pete O'Brien and Pete Incaviglia have already made their move. O'Brien's 98 homers heading into 1988 ranked him third in career homers, while Incaviglia slugged .57 in his first two pro seasons.

A pair of former Oklahoma pitchers now find themselves teammates with the Rangers, as well. Ray Hayward and Bobby Witt have seen both the ups and downs of pro baseball in their short careers, but both (along with a third ex-Sooner on the staff, Dewayne Vaughn) should see even more action as the season progresses.

Yet another Sooner pitcher, Jack Armstrong, became the third member of the 1987 draft to jump to the big leagues in less than a year when he made his major league debut with the Cincinnati Reds in June.

Iowa State's Jim Walewander has made almost as big a name for himself for his off-the-field antics in his brief career, but the scrappy infielder has worked himself into the Tigers' roster, while Missouri's Tim Laudner proved to be one of the Tigers' nemeses last season in the American League Championship Series as the Minnesota Twins went on to win the World Series.

Out of the bullpen, the Tigers' Mike Henneman (OSU) and the Expos' Tim Burke (NU) both had standout campaigns in 1987, while another ex-Husker, Bob Sebra, found his way onto the Expos' roster and wound up finishing eighth in the league in 1987 with 153 strikeouts.

In fact, 1987 saw at least one player from each school in the conference active in the majors. Kansas State product Ted Power toiled for Cincinnati, while Kansas' Steve Jeltz was a shortstop for Philadelphia.

All in all, the current lineup of Big Eight players in the majors, along with the new talent just drafted, promises to give Big Eight baseball fans reason to smile and reason to eagerly await the 1989 campaign and a new list of major league prospects. ■

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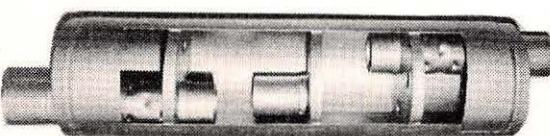


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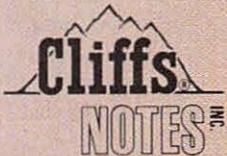
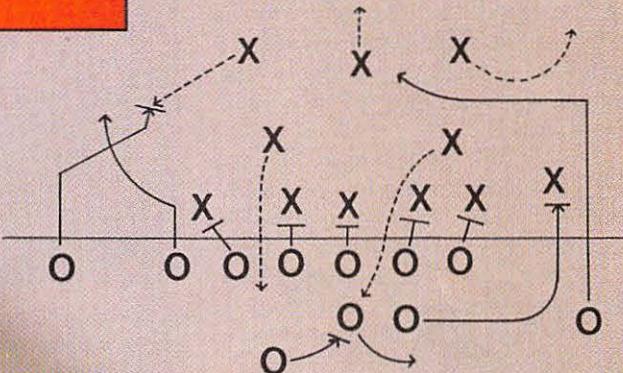
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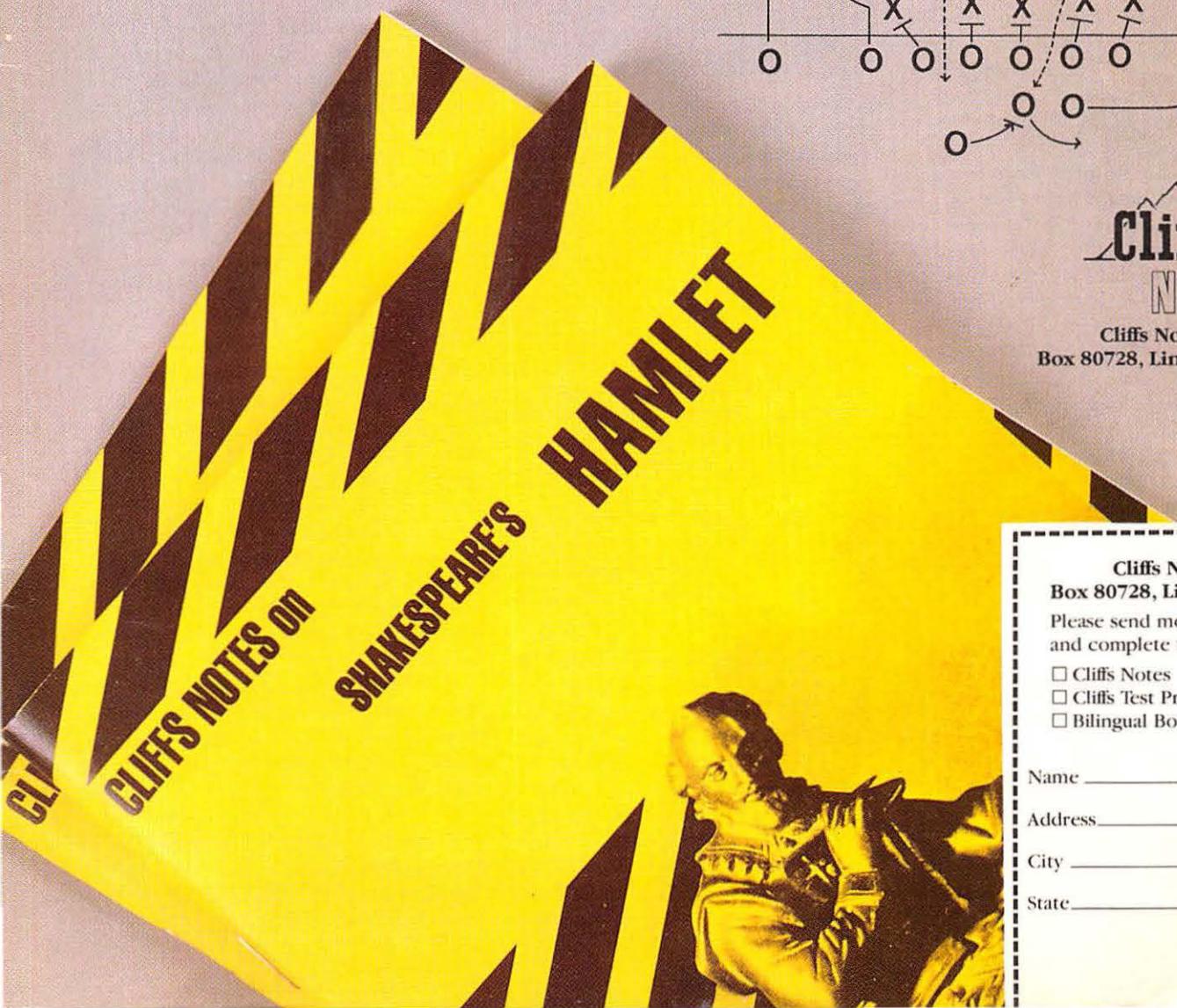
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ASK TOM

Q: A lot of football conferences and individual schools have taken a hard-line approach to the so-called "recruiting" magazines and newsletters by not cooperating with them. What is your feeling about "recruiting newsletters" and has the Big Eight considered a conference-wide policy for dealing with them? Darrell Sizemore, Fort Worth, Tex.

A: I don't think the Big Eight has any policy of non-cooperation. We're a little skeptical of some of those publications because sometimes a player in a metropolitan area, where lots of coaches and people come and go, is going to be rated much higher than somebody in a more sparsely populated area.

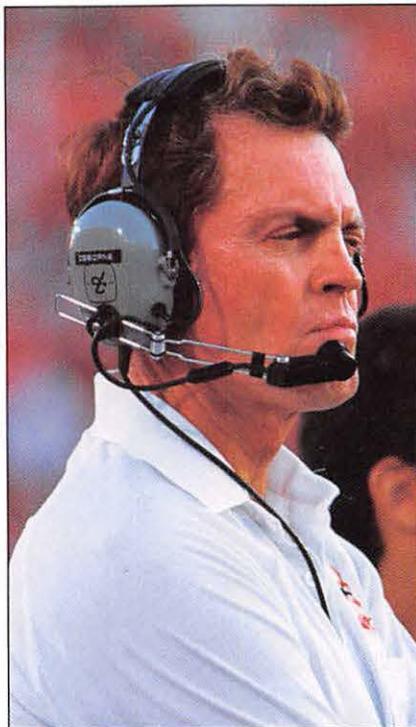
Usually, the way you make the blue chip list is by having lots of people, coaches, sports writers, high school coaches, mention somebody's name. And sometimes, a fairly average player can get mentioned a good deal. So we're a little dubious about some of the lists. But we do look at 'em.

I think the value of those lists gets overblown somewhat. One of the difficult things is that there are lots of fans who really get involved in those publications and their lists and feel like if you don't get a high percentage of those types of players, you haven't done very well in recruiting. So I think, again, it can cause distortion in how well people perceive you're doing.

As far as I know, though, the Big Eight is cooperating as far as those types of magazines.

Q: With the rest of college football moving heavily into strength training, our edge in that area could be under pressure. What's in the future for the Husker strength and conditioning program? Elvin Clark, Omaha, Neb.

A: We are doing a little work in the West Stadium. Some of that area was occupied by General Stores, which was a storage area. They have since moved to other quarters. So the weight room will be expanded somewhat and the academic area will be expanded somewhat, within the next



year. It's not a major renovation, but there will be some additional things. That'll probably not come until some time next winter. It'll give us a little more space.

Boyd Epley has continued to be pretty much on the front edge of weight training. He's done a lot of work with computerizing strength programs, continually looking at new ways to do things. He has a good staff with Mike Arthur and a number of other assistants, and we hope we can continue to be among the leaders in the country in strength training.

Q: What special steps will the Huskers have to take to get ready for playing UCLA on natural grass in the Coliseum? Jason Forbes, North Platte, Neb.

A: We'll probably just practice a little more on the grass fields north of Memorial Stadium that week. We hope we don't have to approximate smog. There's nothing we can do about that. Besides, smog's nothing you can really get used to. I think it will impact UCLA as much as it does us. The heat in August, working out for the Kickoff Classic, should serve us well, too, because it could be pretty

warm in Los Angeles when we play UCLA. We could very well have weather in the 90s out there.

Q: What were some of the more important rule changes by the NCAA this year? Sandy Newman, Nelson, Neb.

A: Possibly the most unusual rule change was giving the defensive team the ability to score on an extra-point kick or a two-point conversion if they block the kick on the point, intercept a pass, or catch a fumble in the air. You can't advance a fumble that hits the ground. It'll probably cause some strategy changes in that if you were leading by one point late in the ball-game, with just a few seconds left, probably rather than kick the point, you'd just down the ball instead of taking a chance of somebody beating you.

I also believe that defensive holding is now a 10-yard penalty, as well as offensive holding. Most of the other rule changes are very minute.

Q: It seemed like a lot was expected out of Junior Monarrez last spring when he transferred in because of his ability and Nebraska's need at noseguard. He did okay but not spectacular. What role do you see Monarrez playing in 1988? Allison Burwell, York, Neb.

A: That's a little hard to tell right now. If Lawrence Pete comes back, as it appears he will, that'll make a little difference. Junior felt he was never in very good shape. He felt like players worked a lot harder at Nebraska in the off-season program and spring ball than he'd ever experienced. He claims he'll be in better shape this fall and that'll help him, improve his speed and quickness. That remains to be seen.

He's still learning the system. He did some good things but he just didn't appear to be physically as ready as we had hoped he might be at the start of spring ball.

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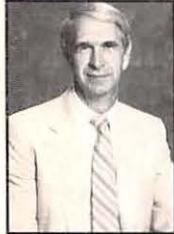
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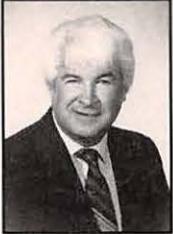
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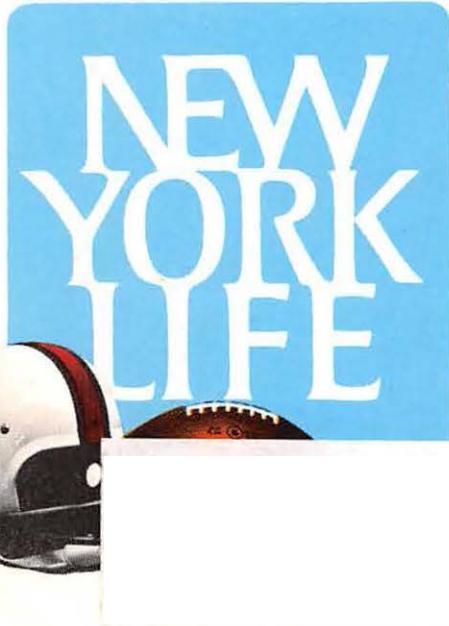
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